

## The Emergence of Impartiality

# Intersections

## Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture

*General Editor*

Karl A.E. Enenkel

Chair of Medieval and Neo-Latin Literature  
Westfälische Wilhelmsuniversität Münster  
e-mail: [kenen\\_01@uni\\_muenster.de](mailto:kenen_01@uni_muenster.de)

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VOLUME 31 – 2014

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# The Emergence of Impartiality

*Edited by*

Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger



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2014

*Cover illustration:* Jan van der Straet (designer) / Adriaen Collaert (engraver), *Spiritus sapientiae* (1551–1600), etching, 290 × 385 mm, Detail. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Graph. Ar:473k.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The emergence of impartiality / edited by Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger.

pages cm — (Intersections : interdisciplinary studies in early modern culture, ISSN 1568–1181 ; VOLUME 31)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-26083-2 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-26084-9 (e-book : alk. paper)

1. Fairness. I. Murphy, Kathryn, editor of compilation.

BJ1533.F2E44 2013

179'.9—dc23

2013031841

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see [www.brill.com/brill-typeface](http://www.brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 1568-1181

ISBN 978-90-04-26083-2 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-26084-9 (e-book)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most contributions in *The Emergence of Impartiality* were first presented during a three-day conference held at Freie Universität Berlin in July 2011. The conference was supported by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and it is our pleasure to convey our gratitude for the generous grant that enabled us to bring an international group of scholars together to lay the foundations for this volume. The Freie Universität's Dahlem Humanities Center, headed by Joachim Küpper and ably managed by Katja Heinrich, and the Interdisciplinary Center 'Middle Ages – Renaissance – Early Modern Times' both aided the project in numerous ways from the publishing of the call for papers to finishing the manuscript.

We are also indebted to the generosity of the Freie Universität's Center for International Cooperation, and the John Fell Fund at the University of Oxford, both of which supplied substantial grants to foster our collaboration by enabling us to spend time at each other's home institution to work on the volume together. The John Fell Fund and the Thyssen Foundation also provided funds which helped cover editorial assistance and translation costs. The Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel generously provided the cover image. The last stages of the editing process greatly benefitted from a fellowship awarded to Anita Traninger by the Einstein Foundation Berlin.

For their exemplary translations of the contributions by Professors Berns and Roling, we would like to thank Pamela E. Selwyn and David Mossop, respectively. Thanks are also due to Mesrop Najarian and Tim Smith-Laing, who undertook editorial assistance in Oxford. At a seminar held in Oriel College, Oxford in November 2012 to discuss this project, Mark Philp and Paul Yowell were particularly generous with their time, comments, and suggestions; Oriel also more generally provided a conducive and convivial atmosphere during the Oxford stages of our collaboration. Finally, we wish to thank Anne Cramer, Anna Magdalena Schwindt, and Ramona Huber, who, at various stages, assisted this project in administrative and editorial regards.



## NOTES ON THE EDITORS

KATHRYN MURPHY is Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Oriel College, University of Oxford. Her research focuses on seventeenth-century English prose and poetry, and the relationship between literature, philosophy, and natural philosophy in the period. She has published various articles on related topics. She is the editor, with Richard Todd, of *A Man Very Well Studied: New Contexts for Thomas Browne* (Leiden: 2008), and is currently preparing a monograph entitled *Thoughts and Things: Knowledge and Experience in Early Modern English Prose*, as well as editions of Thomas Browne's *Urne-Buriall* and *Garden of Cyrus*, and Francis Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum*, for Oxford University Press.

ANITA TRANINGER is Einstein Junior Fellow at the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Freie Universität Berlin. Her areas of research include the history of rhetoric and dialectics, literature and discourses of knowledge in early modern Europe, cultures of violence, and the fact/fiction divide. Among her book publications are *Müheleose Wissenschaft. Rhetorik und Lullismus in den deutschsprachigen Ländern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: 2001), *Macht Wissen Wahrheit*, ed. with K.W. Hempfer (Freiburg i.Br.: 2005), *Dynamiken des Wissens*, ed. with K.W. Hempfer (Freiburg i.Br.: 2007), *Fiktionen des Faktischen in der Renaissance*, ed. with U. Schneider (Stuttgart: 2010), and *Disputation, Deklamation, Dialog. Medien und Gattungen europäischer Wissensverhandlungen zwischen Scholastik und Humanismus* (Stuttgart: 2012).



## NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

JÖRG JOCHEN BERNS is Professor Emeritus of German Literature at the Institut für Neuere Deutsche Literatur & Medien, Philipps-Universität Marburg. His area of expertise is early modern literary and cultural history, and his research interests include the history of courtly culture (ceremonial, theatre, festivities), the history of mnemonics, and the history of the media. Among his numerous book-length publications are: *Die Jagd auf die Nymphe Echo. Zur Technisierung der Wahrnehmung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Bremen: 2011), *Himmelsmaschinen / Höllenmaschinen. Zur Technologie der Ewigkeit* (Berlin: 2007), *Gedächtnislehren und Gedächtniskünste in Antike und Frühmittelalter* (Tübingen: 2003), *Film vor dem Film. Bewegende und bewegliche Bilder als Mittel der Imaginationssteuerung* (Marburg: 2000), *Seelenmaschinen. Gattungstraditionen, Funktions- und Leistungsgrenzen der Mnemotechniken vom späten Mittelalter bis zu Beginn der Moderne*, ed. with W. Neuber (Vienna – Cologne – Weimar: 2000), and *Die Herkunft des Automobils aus Himmelstrionfo und Höllenmaschine* (Berlin: 1996).

TAMÁS DEMETER is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and teaches at the University of Pécs, Hungary. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge and he has held various fellowships at the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Singapore, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. He has published widely on early modern natural and moral philosophies in several collective volumes and journals including *The Monist*, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, and *History of the Human Sciences*. He is co-editor (with Kathryn Murphy and Claus Zittel) of the forthcoming Intersections volume *Conflicting Values of Inquiry: The Ideologies of Epistemology in Early Modern Europe*.

DEREK DUNNE is a teaching associate at Shakespeare's Globe theatre, London, where he lectures on theatre history, Shakespeare in performance, and early modern drama. His doctoral thesis, entitled "Vindictive Justice and Participatory Revenge: English Revenge Tragedy's Engagement with Early Modern Law", was completed at Trinity College, Dublin in 2012.

Previously he completed the MPhil in Renaissance Literature at St. John's College, Cambridge. During his time in Trinity, Derek was an active member of the Early Modern Tavern society, an informal research group investigating all things early modern, which included play-readings, seminars and inquisitions. At undergraduate level he studied English literature and Classical civilization at Trinity College Dublin.

ANNE EUSTERSCHULTE holds a professorship for History of Philosophy at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her research areas are medieval and early modern philosophy, the reception of ancient philosophy in the history of philosophy, and aesthetics, political theory, and ethics in intellectual history to the present day. Her current projects include studies of imagination and illuminations in medieval philosophy, a critical edition of the main works of Athanasius Kircher, the history of hermeticism, and theological semiotics. Book-length publications include *Mimesis oder ästhetische Wahrheit. Geistesgeschichtliche Studien zur Genese eines ästhetischen Wahrheitsbegriffs* (forthcoming, 2013); *Turning Traditions Upside Down: Giordano Bruno's Enlightenment*, ed. with Henning Hufnagel (forthcoming, 2013); *Buchkulturen des deutschen Humanismus. Netzwerke und Kristallisationspunkte*, ed. with F. Eisermann, E. Ouvergaauw, U. Kocher, and E.A. Werner (forthcoming, 2013); *Cicero in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. with G. Frank (forthcoming, 2013).

CHRISTINE GERRARD is a Fellow and Tutor in English at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Her research interests include the relationship between politics and literature in the period 1660–1780; eighteenth-century poetry, especially by women; and the relationship between writing and finance. Her publications include *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725–1742* (Oxford: 1994); *Aaron Hill: The Muses' Projector, 1685–1750* (Oxford: 2003); and as editor, *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Oxford: 2003); *The Blackwell Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: 2006); *The Complete Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, vols 1–2, (Cambridge: 2013). She is currently writing a monograph on literature and society in the reign of George I (1714–1727) and working on a multimedia project linking financial crashes of the eighteenth century and the present day.

RAINER GODEL is Professor of German Literature at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg and Head of the Research Center at the Leopoldina – German National Academy. He has published widely on

literature and philosophy of the European Enlightenment and on early modern controversies, including, among other titles, *Vorurteil – Anthropologie – Literatur. Der Vorurteilsdiskurs als Modus der Selbstaufklärung*, ed. with Hans Adler (2007); *Formen des Nichtwissens der Aufklärung* (2010); and *Klopffechtereien – Missverständnisse – Widersprüche? Methodische und methodologische Perspektiven auf die Kant-Forster-Kontroverse*, ed. with Gideon Stiening (2012).

N.J.S. HARDY is a Title A Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. His research is concerned with humanist philology in the long seventeenth century, with a focus on the British Isles: particularly its interactions with literary criticism on the one hand, and theology on the other. It encompasses biblical criticism, ecclesiastical scholarship, and the reception of the pagan classics.

RHODRI LEWIS is University Lecturer and Tutorial Fellow in English at St Hugh's College, University of Oxford. He is the author of *Language, Mind and Nature* (2007), *William Petty on the Order of Nature* (2012), and numerous shorter studies of topics in early modern literary and intellectual history. At present, he is editing Francis Bacon's early philosophical works, and writing a book on Shakespeare.

HANNS-PETER NEUMANN is a research associate at the Interdisciplinary Centre for European Enlightenment Studies at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. His area of expertise is the history of philosophy and science from the early modern period to modernity. Neumann's current research interests include enlightenment philosophies; problems and methods of the historiography of philosophy; Leibniz and the history of his reception; monadologies; the interconnections between sociology, natural sciences, and philosophy in the nineteenth century; and philosophical critical editions. Among his book-length publications are: *Natura sagax – Die geistige Natur. Zum Zusammenhang von Naturphilosophie und Mystik in der frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel Johann Arndts* (Tübingen: 2004); *Monaden im Diskurs. Monas, Monaden, Monadologien, 1600 bis 1770*, *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa* 37 (Stuttgart: 2013); (ed.) *Der Monadenbegriff zwischen Spätrenaissance und Aufklärung* (Berlin/New York: 2009).

JOAD RAYMOND is Professor of Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. He is the author of *The Invention of the Newspaper* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early*

*Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), and *Milton's Angels: The Early Modern Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2010), and editor of *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, vol. 1: *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford University Press, 2011), and of various collections on early-modern news and writing. He is currently editing Milton's Latin defences for the Oxford *Complete Works of John Milton* and directing an international collaborative project on news networks in early modern Europe.

BERND ROLING is Professor for Classical Latin and Medieval Latin at the Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie. His research interests include high medieval Latin and vernacular poetry; medieval philosophy, especially philosophy of language; the history of early modern science; university history; and early modern esoteric traditions. Recent monographs are: *Aristotelische Naturphilosophie und christliche Kabbalah im Werk des Paulus Ritius* (Tübingen, Niemeyer: 2007); *Locutio angelica. Die Diskussion der Engelsprache als Antizipation einer Sprechaktttheorie in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Leiden, Brill: 2008); *Drachen und Sirenen: Die Aufarbeitung und Abwicklung der Mythologie an den europäischen Universitäten* (Leiden, Brill: 2010); *Physica Sacra: Wunder, Naturwissenschaft und historischer Schriftsinn zwischen Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Leiden, Brill: 2013 (forthcoming)); and, as critical editor with Iolanda Ventura and Baudoin van den Abeele, Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, vol. 1 (Turnhout, Brepols: 2007).

BASTIAN RONGE is currently an appointed lecturer at the philosophy department of Freie Universität Berlin. He received his Ph.D with a doctoral thesis on the moral and economic philosophy of Adam Smith, which is also where his area of expertise lies. In his postdoctoral research project he focusses on various systematic questions of the philosophy of economics.

RICHARD SCHOLAR is Fellow and Tutor in French at Oriel College, Oxford, and a specialist in early modern European literature and thought. He is the author of two books: *The Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi in Early Modern Europe: Encounters with a Certain Something* (2005) and *Montaigne and the Art of Free-Thinking* (2010).

NATHANIEL STOGDILL teaches English literature at The Polytechnic School in Los Angeles, California. His publications include "Abraham Cowley's



‘Pindaric Way’: Adapting Athleticism in Interregnum England”, *English Literary Renaissance* (2012); “Restoration Polemic and the Making of the Papist Milton”, in Mary C. Fenton and Louis Schwartz (eds.), *Their Maker’s Image: New Essays on John Milton* (2011); and “‘An Heap is form’d into an Alphabet’: Conflict and Accommodation in Blount’s *Glossographia*”, *Renaissance Papers* (forthcoming).

ANJA ZIMMERMANN is visiting professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Her main research interests cover modern and contemporary art, the history of science, and gender studies. She is the author of *Abject Art* (Berlin, Reimer: 2001) and *Ästhetik der Objektivität* (Bielefeld, transcript: 2009), and editor of *Animationen/Transgressionen: Das Kunstwerk als Lebewesen*, with U. Pfisterer (Berlin, Akademie: 2005), *Kunstgeschichte und Gender* (Berlin, Reimer: 2006) and *Biologische Metaphern* (Berlin, Reimer: forthcoming).



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## INTRODUCTION: INSTANCES OF IMPARTIALITY

Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger

Friedrich Nietzsche, reflecting on the ‘virtues of the bourgeois herd’, ranked impartiality among them. With beautiful paradoxicality he characterizes it as an activity of inertia, manifesting itself ‘in impartiality and coolness of judgement: one eschews the effort of emotion and rather remains aloof, “objective”’ (‘in der Unparteilichkeit und Kühle des Urtheils: man scheut die Anstrengung des Affekts und stellt sich lieber abseits, “objektiv”’).<sup>1</sup> With this denouncement of impartiality as essentially equivalent to laziness, Nietzsche appears to be inveighing against a moral concept that, alongside truth, trust, righteousness, and others he discusses, has been at the core of human society since time immemorial. It is, however, not an old or traditional notion Nietzsche is castigating; rather, ‘impartiality’ forcefully emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The contributions in this volume illustrate the broad array of disciplines and fields which were affected by and at the same time helped shape this notion. In this introduction, we trace the beginnings, complexity, and contexts of this emergence in the early modern period.

### 1. *Usage*

The word itself was new; negative evidence suggests that the same is true of the concept, or at least its saliency in specifically early modern formulations. It is conspicuously absent in sources such as emblem books, which usually provide helpful illustrations of what early modern minds conceived as virtues, ideals, and abstract ideas, and how they were used to engage with the classical heritage or appropriated for contemporary ideological purposes. Among the many riddling images with witty inscriptions, or the array of allegorical personifications, there is none that we have found

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<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche Friedrich, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, 15 vols., eds. G. Colli – M. Montinari (Munich: 1980–1999) vol. 12, NF–1886, 7 [6].

which addresses impartiality.<sup>2</sup> Closest is the anonymous author of a work published in 1616 who envisaged, but did not provide, such an emblematic depiction, and implied an ambivalence towards impartiality: 'Fortune is painted blinde, as if she saw not, where shee distributed her fauours, nor cared not to whom: and so shee shewes her impariallitie.'<sup>3</sup>

The absence of a convenient emblem of impartiality tells us something about the concept's status at the beginning of the seventeenth century: below the radar. It enters the stage forcibly, however, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is no classical Latin expression "imparialis", and the word does not begin appearing in the vernaculars, as far as we have found, until the sixteenth century. If "imparialis" does appear in Latin texts of the early modern period, as for example in the debates between Christian Wolff and his opponents, as Hanns-Peter Neumann shows in his contribution, it is a coinage following the vernacular. A quantitative observation of the historical sources suggests moreover that impartiality massively gains in currency in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Its use is sparse until the middle of the seventeenth century, when there is an upsurge in usage and particularly in titles of publications graced by the adjective "impartial". As an example, there are no titles in English which contain the word "impartial" before 1600; two before 1640; 114 before 1660; and 405 between 1660 and 1700.<sup>4</sup> The situation in other vernaculars is (*mutatis mutandis*) very similar.

Handbooks, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries betray that they are chronicling a concept *in statu nascendi*, not a fixture among the basic methodological and epistemological tenets of the time. While the earliest record for the French word "impartialité" dates from 1576,<sup>5</sup> Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel*, first published in 1690, struggles to include the term: the entry 'imparfaite-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the rich collection in Henkel A. – Schöne A. (eds.), *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart/Weimar: 1996).

<sup>3</sup> *The rich cabinet furnished with varietie of excellent discriptions, exquisite charracters, witty discourses, and delightfull histories, deuine and morrall* (London, John Beale for Roger Jackson: 1616) fol. 46<sup>v</sup>. This is one of the earliest sources in English for 'impartiality'; the earliest citation in the *OED* dates to 1611. *EEBO* reveals some earlier uses, of which the earliest is Robert Dallington's *The View of France* (London, by Symon Stafford: 1604) fol. H2<sup>r</sup>. 'Unpartiality' appeared in 1579. See *OED*, s.vv. unpartiality, *n.* and impartiality, *n.*

<sup>4</sup> This includes some frequently reprinted works – notably Allestree's *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety, or, An impartial survey of the ruines of the Christian religion* – but their very popularity is significant when considering the diffusion and valorization of impartiality.

<sup>5</sup> See Scholar's contribution in this volume.

ment' is followed by 'impassibilité'. All Furetière offers is a series of contrary notions, from 'parti' to 'partialité', which might help to shed light on the semantic field *e contrario*. 'Parti' (party) alone is awarded eight entries, several of which are figurative or specialist usages which are not relevant here. Two major contexts stand out. The first is that of opposing political entities ('Les François & les Espagnols sont deux partis contraires'). The other is that of propounding contrasting opinions or belonging to rival schools of learning ('Il y a des Docteurs qui soutiennent l'un & l'autre party. Scot & Saint Thomas en Theologie sont des Chefs de *parti*.') With politics and scholarship established as the first two contexts, the adjective 'partial' supplies a third – the qualities of a judge:

PARTIAL, ALE. Celuy qui se declare ouvertement pour un parti. C'est une mauvaise qualité à un Juge que d'être trop *partial*.<sup>6</sup>

The early eighteenth century sees several new editions of the *Dictionnaire* before eventually, in 1727, impartiality makes an appearance, but with only the briefest of definitions, quoting a synonym also absent from the 1690 edition:

IMPARTIAL, ALE, adj. Desinteressé.

IMPARTIALITÉ, s.f. Desinterressement. Comme l'impartialité est une qualité fort rare, il n'arrive guere que ces Auteurs qui se veulent deguiser y reussissent. BAY.<sup>7</sup>

The quotation from Bayle apparently underlines both the inattainability of the ideal and the futility of attempts at feigning impartiality: 'Since impartiality is a very rare quality, it rarely happens that those authors who want to dissimulate are successful.' New though it be, the concept of impartiality is immediately branded as a coveted, yet unattainable ideal.

Another case in point is Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon*, published in 64 volumes and four supplementary volumes between 1731 and 1754. Zedler does include 'unpartheyisch' (impartial), yet he does not assign the term a definition of its own but refers the reader to 'neutral'. He then presents a series of composite entries, such as 'Unpartheyischer Bibliothecarius' ('Impartial Librarian', a journal), or 'impartial judge' from which the reader is again referred to 'rechtschaffener Richter' (righteous

<sup>6</sup> Furetière Antoine, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant generalement tous les mots françois, Tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts*, 3 vols. (The Hague – Rotterdam, Arnout and Reinier Leers: 1690) 49. '[...] he who declares himself openly for one party. It is a bad quality in a judge to be too partial'.

<sup>7</sup> Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* 49.

judge).<sup>8</sup> What is particularly significant are the shifting definitions given for “partiality”: Zedler lists the entries ‘Parthey’ (party), ‘Partheyen’ (parties), ‘partheyisch’ (partial), and ‘Partheylichkeit’ (partiality). ‘Party’ is defined as a ‘Kriegswort’, a military term, while ‘parties’ are those who file lawsuits against each other in law courts. To be ‘partial’ is a vice of judges, while ‘partiality’ is equalled with Latin *studium* and defined as the quality of someone driven by affection for others in forming an opinion or judgement rather than love for truth.<sup>9</sup> What is most impressive here is the definition’s shifts of context – from the military to the political to the juridical and then to the moral.

Impartiality, while connoting openness, un-biasedness, and coolness, thus has a certain enigmatic quality of its own, in response to problems of partiality that emerged from highly diverse traditions and discourses. What seems characteristic is that it oscillates semantically between a *refusal* to join or support one of two parties, or, figuratively, a suspension of judgement; and a certain *quality of judgement*, one that is informed by putting aside personal preferences and foregrounding the arguments at stake.

Of course, issues of judicial bias, neutrality, and political partisanship were not alien before the early modern period, and the coining of a new term does not necessarily suggest a new concept. Several of the contributions in this volume evoke analogues and ancestors for impartiality; others discuss debates in which “impartiality” is at stake, without the word ‘impartiality’ even occurring. What they also show, however, in impartiality’s crucial involvement in debates over method in widely divergent fields – historiography, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, news publications, aesthetics, education, and religion among them – is the complexity of the early modern emergence of a newly articulated ideal.

## 2. *Impartiality and Objectivity*

While the history of the emergence of “impartiality” in these various fields is yet to be told, it has been discussed, in recent years, in connection with the history of objectivity. The emergence of objectivity is an important

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<sup>8</sup> Zedler Johann Heinrich, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle – Leipzig, Johann Heinrich Zedler: 1732–1754, reprint Graz: 1993) vol. 49, 1915–1917.

<sup>9</sup> Zedler, *Universal-Lexicon* vol. 26, 1049–1057.



parallel for our volume. The primary claim of Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's book-length study is that '[s]cientific objectivity has a history': it is not a universal given, and it was constructed and changed over the course of centuries.<sup>10</sup> This volume argues, similarly, that impartiality is a contested and shifting concept. In the history of objectivity, however, impartiality is relegated to a supporting role. An index entry in the first volume of Stephen Gaukroger's magisterial project *Science and the Shaping of Modernity*, which seeks to account for the 'fundamental transformation of intellectual values' constitutive of the modern era, testifies both to the relevance of impartiality to this transformation, and to its relative neglect: 'impartiality, *see* objectivity'.<sup>11</sup> Gaukroger elsewhere defines objectivity thus: 'Objectivity stands in contrast to subjectivity [...]. An objective account is, in this sense, impartial, one which could ideally be accepted by any subject, because it does not draw on any assumptions, prejudices, or values of particular subjects.'<sup>12</sup> Impartiality, here, is just a facet of objectivity. In this section and in the volume as a whole, we show the wider scope of impartiality and its distinctive seventeenth-century forms.

The impulses to a history of objectivity have been various. On the one hand, in the mid- to late twentieth century, various strands of criticism and theory, appalled by technologized warfare and observing the disintegration of the colonial world powers, attempted to undermine the discourses of the rise of the sciences and the rationality of the Enlightenment; objectivity and 'the impartiality of scientific language' were seen as a tool of oppression or exploitation.<sup>13</sup> Post-structuralist, post-colonial, and feminist critics set out to establish the power structures underlying claims to "objectivity", and in the process, to render it historically contingent and ideologically motivated.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007) 17; see also 27–35. This is also true of the *OED*: see *OED* s.v. "objectivity", *n*.

<sup>11</sup> Gaukroger S., *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity 1210–1685* (Oxford: 2006) 1, 557.

<sup>12</sup> Gaukroger S., "Objectivity, history of", in Smelser N.J. – Baltes P.B. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 26 vols. (Amsterdam – New York: 2001) XVI, 10785–10789, here 10785.

<sup>13</sup> Quotation from Adorno T. – Horkheimer M., *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947; London: 1997) 23. On objectivity, see also 37, and more generally 3–42.

<sup>14</sup> For a summary of such discussions, see Solomon J.R., *Objectivity in the Making: Francis Bacon and the Politics of Inquiry* (Baltimore, MD: 1998) 1–8, and nn. 4, 7, 9–10, 20–22, on pp. 231–234. Work in this vein includes Haraway D., "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988) 575–600; Bordo S., *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays in Cartesianism and Culture* (Binghamton, NY: 1987); Deely J. "Postmodernity as the Unmasking of Objectivity: Identifying the

In these critiques, the impulse was not primarily historical; historicization rather aided in undermining discourses of objectivity and universality. The second, and for our volume more immediately germane, historiography of objectivity comes largely from the history of science. As part of a turn away from positivist approaches and towards a sociological or discursive investigation of scientific culture, objectivity ceased to be read as a universal given, and instead received attention as a cultural construct. In Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, an early and influential example of the turn, they emphasize that they will treat 'truth', 'adequacy', and 'objectivity' as 'accomplishments, as historical products, as actors' judgments and categories', rather than as definitional prerequisites of scientific endeavour.<sup>15</sup>

The 'emergence of a discourse of objectivity' is crucially bound up, in most of the literature, with the epistemological shifts and debates of the seventeenth century: the same period, of course, which we argue sees the rise of impartiality.<sup>16</sup> '[O]ne of the distinctive features of early-modern natural philosophy', according to Gaukroger, is that 'questions that had earlier been seen in terms of truth are now discussed instead in terms of impartiality and objectivity';<sup>17</sup> indeed, 'English natural philosophy, at least from the middle of the seventeenth century, is dominated, in the areas of natural history and matter theory, by the notion of objectivity'.<sup>18</sup> The literature often links the birth of objectivity with a sibling, the concept of "fact".<sup>19</sup> It is seen as a strategy of response to peculiarly early modern circumstances: a means of shoring up knowledge against sceptical challenges, and against the Reformation stress on the incapacity of the fallen human intellect, which rendered it necessary to find a basis for judgement

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Positive Essence of Postmodernity as a Distinct New Era in the History of Philosophy", *Semiotica* 183 (2011) 31–57.

<sup>15</sup> Shapin S. – Schaffer S., *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (1985; Princeton, NJ: 2011) 13–14. Cf. also Shapin S., *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making* 1. See also Corneanu S., *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern Cultura Animi Tradition* (Chicago: 2011) 109–110.

<sup>17</sup> Gaukroger, *Emergence of a Scientific Culture* 5.

<sup>18</sup> Gaukroger S., "The Autonomy of Natural Philosophy: from Truth to Impartiality", in Anstey P.R. – Schuster J.A. (eds.), *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century: Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy* (Dordrecht: 2005) 131–163, here 160.

<sup>19</sup> See Shapin S., "Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle's Literary Technology", *Social Studies of Science* 14, 4 (1984) 481–520; Daston L., "Baconian Facts, Academic Civility, and the Prehistory of Objectivity", in Megill A. (ed.), *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham – London: 1994) 37–63; Shapiro B.J., *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550–1720* (Ithaca, NY: 2000).

and interpretation of the natural world not vulnerable to charges of bias, relativity, hubris, or the inadequacy of the mind.<sup>20</sup>

Objectivity in these accounts has several progenitors. Daston, caricaturing the existing literature, states that it 'has a birthday (usually a Cartesian one, either 1637 or 1644)'.<sup>21</sup> The experimental culture surrounding the Royal Society, and especially Robert Boyle, is also frequently held up as the crucible of the modern notion.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps most frequent, however, is an association with the 'patron saint of objectivity', Francis Bacon, and his account of the *idola mentis*.<sup>23</sup> The *Novum Organum*, the methodological foundation of Bacon's proposed renovation of natural philosophy, begins with an account of the 'four kinds of *Idols* which beset human minds', and act as obstacles to a true interpretation of nature. The categories are the Idols of the Tribe, which 'are rooted in human nature itself' and indicate the tendency to see everything from the perspective of man; Idols of the Cave, which represent idiosyncrasies of personality, contingencies of time and space, and whimsicalities of the passions, which bias men's judgements towards their own preoccupations; Idols of the Marketplace, in which 'shoddy and inept application of words lays siege to the intellect in wondrous ways'; and Idols of the Theatre, which represent the skewed judgement that comes from being *parti pris*: an *ipse dixit* style of philosophy, reliant on authority rather than on reason and experience.<sup>24</sup>

Bacon's Idols are clearly intended to free the mind from bias and prejudice, and to establish a state of mind apt for the judgement of truth. But despite the insistent association of the origins of objectivity with seventeenth-century natural philosophers, and Bacon in particular, the

<sup>20</sup> See Harrison P., "Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy in Early Modern England", *Isis* 92, 2 (2001) 265–290, esp. 289; idem, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Daston L., "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective", *Social Studies of Science* 22/4 (1992) 597–618, here 598. On Descartes, see e.g. Harries K., "Descartes, Perspective, and the Angelic Eye", *Yale French Studies* 49 (1973) 28–42; Bordo, *Flight to Objectivity*.

<sup>22</sup> On Boyle and the Royal Society, see e.g. Shapin – Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*; Markley R., "Objectivity as Ideology: Boyle, Newton, and the Languages of Science", *Genre* 16 (1983) 355–372.

<sup>23</sup> Daston, "Baconian Facts" 37; see also Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making*; Zagorin P., "Francis Bacon's Objectivity and the Idols of the Mind", *The British Journal for the History of Science* 34, 4 (2001) 379–393.

<sup>24</sup> Bacon Francis, *Novum Organum*, in *The Instauration magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts*, ed. G. Rees with M. Wakely (Oxford: 2004) 79, 81; for more extended consideration of the Idols, 79–109. Sorana Corneanu's insightful account traces the development of Bacon's Idols in detail, maintaining a three- rather than four-fold categorization: see Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind* 21–26.

most extended study of this history, Daston and Galison's *Objectivity*, argues that to discuss 'objectivity' in the seventeenth century is anachronistic and misleading, and misunderstands the ways in which obstacles to true knowledge were conceptualized: '[t]o prescribe this post-Kantian remedy – objectivity – for a Baconian ailment [...] is rather like taking an antibiotic for a sprained ankle'.<sup>25</sup> Instead, Daston and Galison date the origins of objectivity to the nineteenth century, on the grounds of semantics, and because objectivity requires a modern understanding of subjectivity.<sup>26</sup> Daston suggested that, though concern with some facets of objectivity existed in the earlier period – ontological objectivity, or the adequacy of any representation to how things really are in themselves; mechanical objectivity, which aims at avoiding 'the human propensity to judge and to aestheticize' – early modern versions lack the notion of 'aperspectival objectivity', in which 'individual (or occasionally group [...]) idiosyncrasies' are effaced. The early modern view, for Daston, was always a view from somewhere, and thus not objective.<sup>27</sup>

Several scholars have countered that such caution is unnecessary: that historiography is capable of recognizing objectivity *avant la lettre*, that such retrojection of naming is sometimes necessary, and that, in any case, a notion of aperspectival objectivity was in fact available in earlier periods.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, Bacon's idols represent an attempt to erase both individual and group idiosyncrasy.<sup>29</sup> But caution on the grounds of anachronism is warranted, not least because seeing early modern accounts through the lens of scientific objectivity risks eliding two importantly distinctive facets, both of which can be recovered by focusing instead on impartiality.

The first is the relationship of this putative 'objectivity' to other disciplines. Though Bacon himself does not foreground the terms 'impartiality' or 'impartial', he expresses cognate ideas through language of equality and

<sup>25</sup> Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 33.

<sup>26</sup> For the history of the semantic shifts in "objectivity" and "objective", see Daston L., "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective" 600–603; Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 29–31; Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making* 27–31.

<sup>27</sup> Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective" 599, 597–598. On objectivity as a 'view from nowhere', see Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: 1986).

<sup>28</sup> See Zagorin, "Francis Bacon's Objectivity" esp. 381, and Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making* 9.

<sup>29</sup> Daston earlier recognized in Bacon and Boyle 'a close cousin if not an identical twin of our current notion': "Baconian Facts" 38.

equity borrowed from his training in law.<sup>30</sup> Later Baconians likewise associate impartiality with metaphors from judicial contexts. Walter Charleton, a physician and populariser of Epicureanism who would become an early member of the Royal Society, attributed intellectual error explicitly to an absence of judicial impartiality:

among the Causes of the Intellects erroneous judicature [...] the chiefest and most general is the *Impatience, Præcipitancy, or Inconsiderateness* of the Mind; [...] not enduring the serious, profound, and strict examen of the species, nor pondering all the moments of Reason [...] with that impartiality requisite to a right judgment[.]<sup>31</sup>

Thomas Sprat, meanwhile, an early apologist for the Royal Society, described its aim as ‘an universal, constant, and impartial survey of the whole *Creation*’. His commendation of ‘the impartiality of *Philosophical Inquisitions*’, describing experiments as ‘real, and impartial *Trials*’, makes clear the indebtedness of experimental philosophy to the language of the courts, and the embeddedness of emergent objectivity in practices from a wider scope of disciplines.<sup>32</sup>

The second distinctive aspect of impartiality is its focus on ethos. Precipitated by work on credibility and civility in Robert Boyle’s experimental programme, a rich trend in the recent historiography of science has focused on natural philosophy and history as disciplines aimed not simply at increasing knowledge and the pursuit of truth, but also at cultivation of the persona and habitus of the natural philosopher.<sup>33</sup> That impartiality is central to this process is underscored by Gaukroger’s remark that the dominance of objectivity in the seventeenth century should be understood

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<sup>30</sup> See e.g. a passage on avoiding the Idols of the Cave in which the investigator should strive, as the most recent English translation has it, ‘to keep his intellect impartial and pure’: Bacon’s Latin reads ‘vt Intellectus seruetur æquus & purus’. Bacon, *Novum Organum* 93, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Charleton Walter, *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana, or, A fabrick of science natural, upon the hypothesis of atoms founded by Epicurus* (London, by Thomas Newcomb: 1654) 7.

<sup>32</sup> Sprat Thomas, *The History of the Royal-Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London, for J. Martyn: 1667) 124, 215, 353. For further mentions of impartiality, see 43, 47, 102, 352. See further Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, and Shapin, *Social History of Truth*.

<sup>33</sup> Significant publications include Shapin – Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*; Gaukroger S., *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: 2001); Condren C. – Gaukroger S. – Hunter I. (eds.), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity* (Cambridge: 2006); Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*.

‘not externally, in terms of truth, but internally, in terms of impartiality’.<sup>34</sup> Sorana Corneanu has argued that, in considering the ‘cluster of concepts’ which make up modern objectivity – ‘impartiality, disinterestedness, detachment’ – instead of reading their development in the early modern period as a striving to shed individuality, ‘we might consider putting the individual person back into the picture’, replacing readings of putative ‘objectivity’ with a notion of the curing of the mind and controlling the passions.<sup>35</sup>

A particularly suggestive aspect of Daston and Galison’s account of objectivity is the recognition that ‘[e]pistemology can be reconceived as ethics has been in recent philosophical work: as the repository of multiple virtues and visions of the good, not all simultaneously tenable, [...] each originally the product of distinct historical circumstances’.<sup>36</sup> The prominence of impartiality confirms this model; moreover, if objectivity is clearly an epistemic virtue, impartiality is at once epistemic and moral, aimed at the good as well as at the true. We can find confirmation for the perceived novelty of this virtue as an internal and moral balance of mind in John Wilkins, another founding member of the Royal Society:

men should be careful to preserve their minds free from any wilful prejudice and partiality [...] For though it be true, that the judgments of men must by a natural necessity, preponderate on that side where the greatest Evidence lies; [...] yet must it withal be granted to be a particular virtue and felicity to keep the mind in such an equal frame of judging. [...] And though none of the Philosophers (that I know of) do reckon this kind of *Faith* (as it may be styled), this teachableness and equality of mind in considering and judging of matters of importance, amongst other *intellectual virtues*; yet to me it seems, that it may justly challenge a place amongst them.<sup>37</sup>

Wilkins wants to add a sixth to Aristotle’s five intellectual virtues: *sophia*, *episteme*, *nous*, *phronesis*, and *techne* are to be joined by impartiality, ‘an

<sup>34</sup> Gaukroger, ‘The Autonomy of Natural Philosophy’ 160.

<sup>35</sup> Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind* 109–110, and more generally 106–113. On Gaukroger and Harrison’s constructions of objectivity, see 15–18. On the passions, see esp. Tilmouth C., *Passion’s Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: 2007); Gaukroger S. (ed.), *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* (London: 1998); James S., *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 33.

<sup>37</sup> Wilkins John, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, by A. Maxwell for T. Basset, H. Brome, R. Chiswell: 1675) 35–37; for more on Wilkins’s impartiality, see Lewis’s contribution in this volume.

equal frame of judging'.<sup>38</sup> Wilkins supplies clear evidence that impartiality was seen as a *new* phenomenon, not previously discussed by 'the Philosophers', and confirms an understanding of epistemology based on virtue ethics and the cultivation of the mind not only in experimental science, but in any sphere involving the exercise of judgement. As such, impartiality has as much purchase in religion, politics, philosophy, criticism, ethics, and aesthetics as in natural history and natural philosophy; it is an ideal for judges, kings, God, historians, publishers of news as much as for experimenters. Impartiality proves to be more than just a backdrop for discussions of objectivity in natural philosophy and natural history. Considering it is thus apt to shed light on the inter-implication of methodological changes in discourses such as law, ethics, natural philosophy, and politics in the early modern period.

### 3. *The Ambivalence of Impartiality*

As the notion of epistemology as a realm of competing virtues might suggest, impartiality could collide with other virtues that meant that it was not always or universally considered a good thing. To be impartial could, for example, be considered a failure of necessary engagement, particularly in times perceived as national emergencies. Thus Joseph Addison, who as Mr. Spectator cultivated a *persona* of detachment which 'never espoused any Party with Violence',<sup>39</sup> could argue vociferously against precisely such detachment when in fear of a Jacobite uprising:

Men who profess a State of Neutrality in Times of Publick Danger, desert the Common Interest of their Fellow-Subjects [...] when the whole Community is shaken, and the Safety of the Publick endanger'd, the Appearance of a Philosophical or an affected Indolence must arise either from Stupidity, or Perfidiousness. [...] Our Country is not now divided into two Parties, who propose the same End by different Means; but into such as would preserve, and such as would destroy it. [...] In such a Case, an avow'd Indifference is Treachery to our Fellow-Subjects[.]<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For the five intellectual virtues, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139B 15.

<sup>39</sup> [Addison Joseph], *The Spectator* 1 (Thursday, 1 March 1711), in *The Spectator*, ed. D.F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: 1965) vol. I, 4–5.

<sup>40</sup> [Addison Joseph], *The Freeholder* 13 (Friday, 3 February 1716), in *The Freeholder*, ed. J. Leheny (Oxford: 1979) 96–98.



What in times of peace is an appropriately moderate response, Addison asserts, is a crime in states of emergency and exception. As the articles in this volume by Joad Raymond, Nathan Stogdill, and Christine Gerrard suggest, it is precisely in periods of intense political, religious, and civil conflict, and thus of partisanship, that impartiality generates its most impassioned and frequent claims.<sup>41</sup> What Addison's rejection of neutrality suggests is the irony that it is these times too which generate the most explicit critiques of impartiality.

Criticism of impartiality could also come, unexpectedly, from rival senses of justice. One can see this in a paradigmatic case of righteous judgement, represented on this volume's cover and discussed in Derek Dunne's contribution: the Judgement of Solomon. In a story told in 1 Kings 3.16–28, two harlots come to King Solomon for a judgement. One woman's child has died; the other's lives. Both lay claim to the living baby. Solomon demands that a sword be brought, and passes judgement that the baby be divided in two, and half given to each mother. One woman acquiesces; the other immediately claims that the child is not hers. Solomon therefore restores the child to the second woman, the true mother.

Though Solomon is frequently held up as the paradigmatic impartial judge, the judgement in fact drives a wedge between justice and impartiality. Solomon's initial judgement is the most superficially impartial: he suggests that the baby be partitioned equally. This decision elicits the true mother's partiality; it is the false mother who is indifferent. The true judgement thus rewards appropriate partiality. Read like this, the judgement of Solomon appears as an allegory of the necessity of both partiality and impartiality in justice. The distinction is similar to that in Aristotle's *Politics* between numerical and proportional justice: the first does not respect persons, and treats all equally; the second adjudges according to merit or desert.<sup>42</sup>

Impartiality might thus imply two contradictory forms of justice. A further example of the criticism of impartiality provides a context in which it could be constructed as unjust. The earliest citations the *OED* supplies for "impartial" – not in fact the earliest uses of the word – are both from 1597, and both from Shakespeare. The first, from *Richard II*, is straightforward: Richard states, in hearing the dispute which opens the play,

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<sup>41</sup> The evidence gathered in these essays is supported by the admittedly imperfect statistical data supplied by searching for 'impartial' and 'impartiality' in EEBO keyword searches, and Google n-grams.

<sup>42</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics* 5.1 (1302B 30).



‘impartial are our eyes and ears’.<sup>43</sup> He is disingenuous, as his subsequent judgements will reveal, but from the point of view of the positive sense of “impartial”, the usage is unproblematic. The second citation is however more troubling to the lexicographer. It appears in the first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*, as the Capulets discover Juliet, apparently dead, on the morning of her planned wedding to Paris. Her father exclaims: ‘Cruel, unjust, impartial destinies, | Why to this day have you preserv’d my life?’. The lexicographer – supported by a recent editor – is forced to call this a ‘misuse’ of impartial for partial.<sup>44</sup> But this misses the sense of Capulet’s complaint against the ‘destinies’. In a play riven by faction and party – it is the implacable binary of factional hate between two families that causes the tragedy – the impartiality of fate is to Capulet unjust and cruel: like blind Fortune, the destinies cannot be moved by the special pleas of the wounded and afflicted, and are not open to emotional appeals or sympathy. The indiscriminate failure to recognize either Capulet’s self-believed righteousness or the claims of his own partiality for his daughter, is, to him, at once impartial and unjust.

#### 4. Divine Impartiality

Such ambivalences are particularly problematic when considered in the context of divine judgement.<sup>45</sup> New Testament warrant makes God’s impartiality axiomatic.<sup>46</sup> In several places, Paul refers to God as showing no partiality – usually expressed as not taking ‘persons’ into account.<sup>47</sup> The most explicit is the letter to the Romans: ‘there is no respect of persons with God’.<sup>48</sup> The context establishes the rectitude of God’s judgement as

<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare William, *King Richard II*, ed. A. Gurr (Cambridge: 2003) 72 (l.i.115).

<sup>44</sup> Shakespeare William, *The First Quarto of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. L. Erne (Cambridge: 2007) 137 (17.85–86), and note *ad loc.*

<sup>45</sup> On divine impartiality generally, see Bassler J.M., “Divine Impartiality in Paul’s Letter to the Romans”, *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984) 43–58; eadem, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (Chico: 1982); Roetzel C.J. – Foster R.L. (eds.), *The Impartial God: Essays in Biblical Studies in Honour of Jouette M. Bassler* (Sheffield: 2007).

<sup>46</sup> The Old Testament also repeatedly stresses God’s impartiality: see 2 Chronicles 19.7; Deuteronomy 10.17; Job 34.19, and Bassler, *Divine Impartiality* 7–27. More general injunctions against the partiality of judges, or commending impartiality in everyday action, appear at e.g. Exodus 23.6–8; Leviticus 19.15; Deuteronomy 1.17, 16.19; Psalms 82.1–4; Proverbs 28.21.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Acts 10.34–35 and 1 Peter 1.17, Galatians 2.6.

<sup>48</sup> The Greek reads ‘οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ’. See also Acts 10.34–35.

opposed to the corruption of human justice, and rejects the notion of a chosen people, insisting that God does not distinguish between Jew and Gentile. Three kinds of impartiality are at stake: a judicial impartiality, in which God 'will render to every man according to his deeds', without regard to person or ethnic origin;<sup>49</sup> an impartiality of negative judgement, on the grounds of universal sin ('for there is no difference: For all have sinned');<sup>50</sup> and an impartiality with regard to the proffer of grace and justification by faith, not works.<sup>51</sup>

As modern theologians have observed, Pauline divine impartiality thus rests on an apparent incompatibility: 'impartiality in judgment according to works and impartiality in justification through faith'.<sup>52</sup> While it may be possible to resolve this paradox by appeal to Paul's consistent insistence on impartiality itself, the polemical charge in the early modern period is obvious. Both Erasmus and Luther wrote commentaries on Romans; indeed, it is through engagement with the difficulties of exegesis of the first four chapters that Luther formed his doctrine of *sola fides* and justification through faith. The issue of how to interpret divine impartiality sits at the centre of the contention between Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, and Roman Catholic interpretations of the doctrine of salvation and soteriology.

God however is not only described as impartial by Paul, but also as faithful; God sides with the faithful and does not abandon his chosen people.<sup>53</sup> This notion of chosenness was a powerful figure of thought in the early modern period, when groups as diverse as German Protestants, the Catholic Kingdom of France, and England, which saw itself as showered with 'divine Anglophilia', claimed to be the new nation of Israel.<sup>54</sup> Where religion was entangled with politics, God's partiality was taken for granted, and acted as the anvil on which factions and nations forged their identities.

<sup>49</sup> Romans 2.6 ('ὁσ ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ').

<sup>50</sup> Romans 3.22–23 ('οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή· πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον').

<sup>51</sup> Romans 3.24, 27–30.

<sup>52</sup> Bassler, "Divine Impartiality" 58, and *Divine Impartiality* 165–166.

<sup>53</sup> 1 *Corinthians* 10.13 ('fidelis autem Deus'); Romans 9–11.

<sup>54</sup> Dixon C.S., *Protestants: A History from Wittenberg to Pennsylvania 1517–1740* (Malden, MA – Oxford: 2010) 60–92, esp. 87–88; Walsham A., *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: 1999) 281–325, esp. 287–290 (quotation from 289). For a general discussion with a view to emerging nation states see Smith A.D., *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: 2003).

### 5. *Summary of Contributions*

That impartiality emerged in the early modern period demands a consideration of its forebears, and our volume begins with a section on “Prehistories”. Anita Traninger’s contribution asks whether – and if so, how – early modern scholarly practices that were first conceived in antiquity and put a premium on the ability of taking sides in argumentation relate to new notions of impartiality. The practice of taking sides or *in utramque partem disserere*, equally anchored in the arts of rhetoric and dialectics, was a schooling in partiality. Rhetorical and dialectical education in antiquity, as in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, valorized the moulding of versatility in pro and con discourse, not with the objective of reaching consensus or compromise, but of forging a winning argument. Being able to argue both sides of a question with equal force as the rationale of training in the trivium made the technique prone to accusations of sceptical indecision, both by contemporaries and in modern scholarship. Indeed, as Traninger shows, it has been often identified with the teachings of the Academy under the leadership of Carneades. Yet the practice of arguing against a position was a mainstay of intellectual exchange in general, and thus taking sides informed a highly diverse range of schools and traditions, from Platonic dialogue to Ciceronian rhetoric, from scholastic disputation to humanist declamation, and indeed from sophistic performance to sceptical anti-dogmatism. As a consequence, even though taking sides had been coupled with detachment between personal opinion and a defended thesis, the emergence of impartiality caused a complex and convoluted process of methodological transformation.

Richard Scholar’s contribution considers Montaigne, whose engagement with the sceptical tradition, and especially the notion of the suspension of judgement, makes him central to impartiality – even though, as Scholar observes, he nowhere uses the words ‘impartialité’ or ‘impartial’. In Scholar’s account, Montaigne strives to develop an impartiality of judgement which is intimately bound up with his notion of free-thinking and *libertas philosophandi*. Born as much out of the intense pressures towards partisanship of the French wars of religion, as out of scepticism, Montaigne’s impartiality is, according to Scholar, a resistance to dogma. Scholar stresses that this is not, however, equivalent to neutrality, or to a refusal of judgement, but a resistance to the co-opting of one’s judgement by political expediency or circumstance. Montaigne’s example also demonstrates ways in which literary style can be used to render impartiality:

in the freedom of movement of his prose, and in the inclusion of readers in the ideals of freedom, judiciousness, and impartiality it espouses.

The association between impartiality and *libertas philosophandi* points to the wider fields of anti-dogmatism – a major consequence of the early modern fascination with Pyrrhonian scepticism – and the promotion of a methodological eclecticism in scholarly contexts.<sup>55</sup> In England, inspired in part by Bacon's *Idols of the Theatre*, anti-dogmatism became crucial to impartiality: the Royal Society's motto, famously, was – and still is – *nullius in verba*, or on no man's word.<sup>56</sup> Eclecticism not only evolved from selective thinking to the imperative of thinking on one's own;<sup>57</sup> it was also strongly linked to a new emphasis on courteous manners.<sup>58</sup> Just as, in the natural philosophical realm, impartiality was bound up with ethos and moral virtue, here too there are structural links between method and conduct, scholarship and ethics: questions that are also taken up by Rainer Godel's contribution on Thomasius, below.

The next section brings together two considerations of a field in which impartiality is especially prominent: periodical news publications in the middle of the seventeenth century. Jörg Jochen Berns's now classic essay on partiality and the press is here translated into English for the first time,

<sup>55</sup> See Popkin R., *The History of Scepticism. From Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. ed. (1960; Oxford: 2003); Mulrow M., "Eclecticism or Skepticism? A Problem of the Early Enlightenment", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, 3 (1997) 465–477. On the role of *libertas philosophandi* in the Enlightenment see Zenker K., *Denkfreiheit. Libertas philosophandi in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Hamburg: 2012).

<sup>56</sup> A partial quotation from Horace, *Epistles* 1.1, ll. 13–14: 'ac ne forte roges quo me duce, quo lare tute, | nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri' (And so that you will not ask to which leader or to which household gods I entrust myself: I am not obliged to swear by the words of any master).

<sup>57</sup> Albrecht M., *Eklektik. Eine Begriffsgeschichte mit Hinweisen auf die Philosophie- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: 1994); Schneider U.J., "Eclecticism and the History of Philosophy", in Kelley D.R. (ed.), *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Rochester: 1997) 83–101; Schmidt-Biggemann W., *Topica universalis: Eine Modellgeschichte humanistischer und barocker Wissenschaft* (Hamburg: 1983) 272–288.

<sup>58</sup> Gierl M., *Pietismus und Aufklärung. Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: 1997) 555. On politeness in general see Goldgar A., *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven – London: 1995). On its intrinsic aporiae and inevitable gaps between ideal and practice see Jaumann H., "Respublica litteraria/Republic of letters – Concept and Perspectives of Research" in idem (ed.), *Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus* (Wiesbaden: 2001) 11–19, and Hirschi C., "Piraten der Gelehrtenrepublik. Die Norm des sachlichen Streits und ihre polemische Funktion", in Bremer K. – Spoerhase C. (eds.), *Gelehrte Polemik. Intellektuelle Konfliktverschärfungen um 1700* (Frankfurt a.M.: 2011) 176–213.

together with a more recent reflection on the theme in the form of ten theses. Berns demonstrates how 'newsmen' in the German lands, who were at once the publishers, editors, and printers of periodical news publications, negotiated partiality. Bound to a territory and its political interests, they accepted allegiance to their prince, but at the same time presented news that reached them from all over Europe. To avoid being held responsible for unfavourable or politically sensitive items, they created the authorless newspaper, abstaining from comment on news received from more or less trustworthy sources. Berns also shows how the mechanisms of the news business, reading habits, and the distribution of printed sheets disprove some of Jürgen Habermas's core theses on the emergence of the public sphere.

Joad Raymond considers similar issues in the English context, using evidence from the transmission of European news, the newsbooks of the fraught 1640s and 1650s, and the presentation of historical documents from that period in the later seventeenth century. These texts offer contested notions of impartiality, and Raymond uses them to expose faultlines in claims to impartial status: between judicious editorial intervention, and the mere presentation of unedited documents; between 'impartial' material laid open to the readers' judgement, and 'impartial' material in the service of partisan interests.

The subsequent section, "Poetry, Politics, and the Law", continues to explore the role of impartiality in relation to political party, but pays sustained attention to particular case studies of the presentation of impartiality in literary texts. Derek Dunne's contribution, on English revenge tragedy, exposes the ways in which literary genre can provide a crucible in which the nature of justice and impartiality can be probed. Comparing the impartiality demanded of judges in legal theory with the egregious partiality of legislators represented on the stage, Dunne opens up the connections between constructions of impartiality in the law and other fields, and exposes the critique of partial judges in the theatre.

Nathan Stogdill's article presents further examples, complementary to Raymond's, of the construction of impartiality in the ephemeral press of the 1640s, and in connection with the Royal Society in the 1660s. Like Raymond and Scholar, Stogdill observes that impartiality could mean not neutrality, but a critically engaged judiciousness, which may even declare partisan allegiances. He brings this insight to bear on Abraham Cowley, who developed a stance of flexibility and retreat both in his life and his poetry to respond to the dogmas and partisanship of his period. Christine Gerrard's essay takes the focus into the early eighteenth-century, and the

beginnings of political party in England. The first part of her contribution exposes the connection between periods of intense political partisanship and claims of impartiality in print, before attending to the differing definitions of impartiality represented by two poems – “The Impartial” and “A Poet’s Impartial Reply, To a Poem, entitled The Impartial”. Like the examples gathered by Raymond and Stogdill, these expose the contestation of notions of impartiality between judicious engagement in controversy, and the refusal to engage at all.

Such contestations are the subject of the articles gathered in the next section, “Impartiality in Controversy”. Rhodri Lewis studies claims of impartiality in the context of religious debates of the 1660s and 1670s in England. After the intense conflicts of the 1640s and 1650s, writers on religion, politics, and natural philosophy tried to establish a more rational discursive mode, based on common understanding of virtue and morality, and on the avoidance of passionate style and enthusiastic zeal. Focusing on two examples – John Wilkins’s *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, and a sermon preached by Seth Ward in 1673 – Lewis exposes a conflict between modes of argumentation in religious contexts. While Wilkins relies on universal reason and common notions, Ward foregrounds the necessity of scriptural revelation, and thereby implicitly critiques Wilkins’s claim that impartiality might act as a foundation for Christian morality. In the process, Lewis reveals how Wilkins’s claims to impartiality are disingenuous and tendentious, exposing the controversial basis of the apparently impartial claims of Restoration divines.

Rainer Godel focuses on Christian Thomasius’s *Monatsgespräche* (1688 ff.), which has been described as the first German-language journal dedicated to literary criticism. Godel argues that the generic shift from academic treatise to public “journal”, and with it the opening up of debates to a larger audience, generated a new type of controversy. The new format involved the reader as an arbitrator external to the academic realm and thus “naturally” impartial. This scenario was so powerful that, when Thomasius took up the task of reviewing his academic career and especially the disputes in which he had participated, he decided to re-publish and comment on a good portion of them in an eight-volume collection of *Händel* (1720 ff.) so that an impartial judge – the reader – could revisit these past contentions. In this re-issuing of previously published material, Thomasius fashioned himself as having argued impartially, but at the same time left it to the impartial audience to judge not only his merit, but the opposing arguments laid out before them. Godel’s contribution thus shows in an exemplary manner how “impartiality” was paradoxically

deployed as a polemical device intended to hold polemic and emotional confrontation at bay. These rhetorical strategies set the stage for the particular take on public debate characteristic of the Enlightenment.

Hanns-Peter Neumann investigates the functions of the term “impartiality” in debates that took place between 1720 and 1750 between followers of Christian Wolff and Isaac Newton, and between Wolffians and Pietist and Lutheran theologians. Neumann shows how, in Wolff’s system, impartiality equals rationality, while partiality stems from unreflected reliance on authorities. In the second part of his article, Neumann demonstrates that the concept of impartiality was deeply embedded in Wolffian notions of objective and subjective reason, and that the notion was closely tied to a ‘rationalistic optimism’. Nonetheless, Wolff, at the same time, employed appeals to impartiality as a strategic device in controversies he entered throughout his life. Neumann’s reconstruction of a disagreement between Wolff and Johann Franz Budde shows how Wolff’s metaphysical grounding of impartiality was easily brushed aside when he urged his readers to side with him rather than rely on their own impartial judgement.

The contributions in this section, while approaching the topic from diverse angles and different national contexts, all seem to illustrate a quip from Georg Christoph Lichtenberg’s *Sudelbücher* (*Scrapbooks*): ‘Alle Unparteilichkeit ist artifizuell. Der Mensch ist immer parteiisch und tut sehr recht daran. Selbst Unparteilichkeit ist parteiisch. Er war von der Partei der Unparteiischen’ (‘All impartiality is artificial. Man is always partial and rightly so. Even impartiality is partial. He was of the party of impartial’).<sup>59</sup>

From a focus on the mechanics of controversy in various fields of public discourse, we move on to impartiality as a feature of scholarly practice in the next section. Nick Hardy’s essay addresses the first major controversy in vernacular scholarship in England: the response to John Selden’s *History of Tithes* (1618). Hardy exposes how the grounds of the debate rested on disagreement about the proper use of historical sources, and shows a further discursive context in which impartiality of method is established as equivalent to freedom of judgement, opposed to dogmatism. The debates adduced by Hardy show how ecclesiastical criticisms of Selden’s secular and philological method complained of the dangers of such claims to disinterestedness: the ways in which assertions of impartiality could in fact

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<sup>59</sup> Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Sudelbücher*, ed. W. Promies, 2 vols. (Munich: 2005) vol. 1, Heft F, 578.



be used, disingenuously, to forward ideological and *parti pris* positions. Hardy also reveals how the philologist's central methodological tools – especially conjectural emendation – could be made vulnerable, in their departure from documentary sources, to further accusations of partiality.

Anne Eusterschulte then turns to a milestone in the history of criticism, Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. With Herbert Jaumann, Eusterschulte characterizes Bayle's monumental endeavour as a 'functional equivalent' of Cartesian doubt, as a method that yields certain results. Bayle's notion of impartiality not only referred to requirements for the critic, but implied an active involvement of the reader. The concept is applied in a range of different senses within the *Dictionnaire*, a list which Eusterschulte calls Bayle's 'toolbox of historical criticism': impartiality figures as a moral issue, an epistemological problem, an anthropological approach, a theory and practice of critique, and an educational principle. Eusterschulte argues that the question of natural morality is at the heart of Bayle's methodological critique of historiography and goes on to show how Bayle, in typically scattered manner, expounds his idea of impartial judgement in articles on the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, the historian Pierre-Jean Capriata, and the town of Usson.

Hardy's and Eusterschulte's articles document a turning point in the organization of scholarship. While critique as public assessment of current literature did not figure in the ensemble of early modern learned practices, it moved to the centre of intellectual attention in the early Enlightenment and beyond. It depended on a *libertas philosophandi* which itself presupposed and, at the same time, helped promote, the notion of an impartial, disinterested mind.<sup>60</sup>

Following the emphasis on natural morality Eusterschulte identified in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, the contributions in the next section are dedicated to moral philosophy. Tamás Demeter argues that objectivity in the modern sense – a detachment from all bias and the presumption of a view from nowhere – was alien to David Hume. Hume did, however, seek to explore the human point of view in relation to moral judgements. He did so by distinguishing between moral cognition and moral philosophy: the for-

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<sup>60</sup> Jaumann H., *Critica. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Literaturkritik zwischen Quintilian und Thomasius* (Leiden – New York – Cologne: 1995) esp. 14, 213, 225. On the eighteenth century, when 'impartiality' was widely accepted as a precondition for critical assessment, and debates emerged about its extent, see Napierala M., "Unparteilichkeit und Polemik. Kritik am Rezensionswesen und die Ordnung der Gelehrtenrepublik", in Matuschek S. (ed.), *Organisation der Kritik. Die Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung in Jena 1785–1803* (Heidelberg: 2004) 77–112.



mer the process of making moral judgements, the latter a descriptive and explanatory undertaking that provides a theory of moral cognition. Taking up key notions from Daston and Galison's *Objectivity*, Demeter describes moral cognition and moral philosophy as informed by different epistemic ideals: while moral philosophy is guided by *truth-to-human-nature*, moral cognition is based on a type of *aperspectival objectivity*. The latter thus depends, Demeter argues, on a particular type of impartiality, one that seeks to dispense with individual idiosyncrasies by substituting biased and situated personal sentiments with 'the common point of view'.

While Hume's theory can thus be aligned with and explained through notions of impartiality, Adam Smith actually developed the idea of an impartial spectator in moral philosophy. Scholars of Smith agree that the impartial spectator is a metaphor for an internalized authority that vouches for accurate moral judgements, yet there has been disagreement about the point of view this observer represents. Does he stand for society's norms and conventions, or for some transcendental authority? Bastian Ronge argues for both, and suggests that Smith's spectator is modelled on Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* or, indeed, Addison and Steele's *Spectator*, as an aloof stranger who judges the society he observes with indifference. Against the background of Smith's deep familiarity with Stoic philosophy, Ronge concludes that Smith's impartial spectator marks the return of a figure common in ancient philosophy, the parrhesiast, who advises through outspoken and fearless intervention. Both contributions in this section thus show how techniques of alienation inform the conceptualization of moral judgement, whether through the replacement of personal moral sentiment by a common point of view, or through conceiving of a moral authority modelled on both the stranger and the parrhesiast. Both Hume's and Smith's approaches, like the natural philosophical insistence on impartiality as prerequisite for true judgement, testify to the internalization of a notion of impartiality.

The contributions in the concluding section converge in a focus on observation, yet in two very different spheres: biological classification and aesthetics. Bernd Roling traces Carl von Linné's handling of those cases where received wisdom and the findings of the scientific observer could not be brought into agreement. Linné insisted on an empiricist approach that privileged observation in order to let things speak for themselves. But he also took into account a host of sources that were so far removed from the scientific realm that others would not even consider them: myths, tales, local customs, curses, love spells, and other lore natives would communicate to him on his travels. Linné collected these materials and

refused to pass judgement if a clear-cut decision could not be made: in cases where phenomena could not be classified positively, they were nevertheless integrated in the system as *obiecta non confirmata*, assessment pending. Roling demonstrates that Linné's willingness to listen to spirit healers and to contemplate omens stems from the same disinterested empirical attitude that guided his observations of plants and animals, and that his outlook was in fact more modern than critics of his relaxed attitude towards superstition would have it.

Anja Zimmermann's contribution points towards another emerging field in which impartiality would take on a major role, that of aesthetics, where it is generally, following Kant, discussed under the label of 'disinterestedness'. Zimmermann presents the case of Alexander Cozens's *Principles of Beauty Relative to the Human Head* (1778), a work that holds a special place in eighteenth-century debates about beauty. At a time when attempts at the normative description of beauty began to erode, Cozens set out to provide just such a norm, devising principles of beauty that strictly conformed to the ideals of classical antiquity. As Zimmermann argues, these nonetheless accorded with the endeavours of his contemporaries, as in general there was a shift from a focus on the inherent qualities of objects to the response of the beholder. Here, the observer is again conceived as an impartial, 'uncharactered and unimpassioned' spectator, whose impartiality Cozens, rather paradoxically, seeks to secure by supplying a formula for beauty. The figure of the impartial spectator, whom we have already encountered in moral philosophy and satirical periodical literature of the eighteenth century, was thus so powerful that it was used even in a context that explicitly sought to provide aesthetic directives.

## 6. *Further Directions*

In addition to the perspectives on impartiality covered by our introduction and contributors, there are two fields that particularly warrant investigation but which are not addressed more fully within this volume. One is history, or rather, early modern and modern historiography; the other religious conflict and eirenicism.

In religious history, the notion of party was applied in the high and late Middle Ages to schisms, but interestingly did not generally figure in the early vocabulary of the German Reformation. Only at the end of the sixteenth century did the term take root north of the Alps, when it had become clear to members of the various confessions that the process of

factionalization was irreversible.<sup>61</sup> Still, early usages of ‘impartiality’ are connected with the development of religious factions in the Reformation, and indeed the earliest occurrence of “impartiality” in a vernacular we were able to glean stems from this context. The radical Sebastian Franck (1499–1542) is counted among the first who argued for impartiality in the face of ever more acrimonious dispute not only between Protestants and Catholics, but also among the orthodox and radical currents within protestantism. Franck claimed that the true church was not to be found on earth and he thus called for a ‘frei/ onsectisch/ onparteiisch Christenthum’ (‘a free, non-sectarian, impartial Christendom’) under an impartial God, within which differences would pertain only to superficial matters which did not jeopardize unity of belief.<sup>62</sup>

This vision of overcoming sectarianism by impartially assessing the teachings of religious sects, born of the firm conviction that they all spoke of the one God and essentially conveyed one true belief, spawned a series of irenic projects. Associates of Samuel Hartlib agreed that the religious sects of protestantism should aim at reunification, but disagreed about method. John Moriaen, a contact of Hartlib’s based in Amsterdam, voiced his disapproval of sectarianism by commending those he considered impartial: “[u]nparteiisch” was one of Moriaen’s highest commendations of a group or an individual, and its opposite, “parteiisch”, [...] one of his sternest criticisms’.<sup>63</sup> Moriaen’s recipe for religious peace left leeway for all sorts of beliefs, as long as impartiality was secured by neglecting details (and thus the prime source of disagreement): ‘My advice, in my simplicity, would be that, given such diversity of sects and opinions, one should keep oneself disinterested and impartial as far and for as long as possible, keeping to generalities and not entering into particulars.’<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Brunner O. – Conze W. – Koselleck R. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: 1974–2004), Art. “Partei, Faktion”, vol. IV, 677–716, here 683.

<sup>62</sup> Franck Sebastian, *Paradoxa Ducenta octoginta* (Ulm, Hans Varnier: s.a. [1534]) Vorred fol. 4<sup>v</sup>; see on Franck’s notion of an invisible church Barbers M., *Toleranz bei Sebastian Franck* (Bonn: 1964) 140–144; on God’s impartiality *ibid.* 113–114.

<sup>63</sup> Young J.T., *Faith, Medical Alchemy and Natural Philosophy: Johann Moriaen, Reformed Intelligencer, and the Hartlib Circle* (Aldershot: 1998) 83.

<sup>64</sup> Moriaen to Hartlib, 31 March 1639, trans. in Young, *Faith, Medical Alchemy and Natural Philosophy* 84. Young comments that ‘Moriaen’s eschewal of comment on potentially divisive “incidentals” [was so thorough] that it is virtually impossible to deduce what he did regard as fundamental, beyond the idea that there is one Supreme Being whose will is discernible in the Bible and the natural world, and that it behooves mankind to acquiesce unreservedly in that will’.

Interestingly, one result of these objectives was a search for a new logic that would provide certain and incontestable decisions on controversial issues, thus disburdening believers from choosing the right side.<sup>65</sup> Such a technically-ensured impartiality is in stark contrast to ideas about free-thinking that emerged in other realms at the same time. The relations between these endeavours towards new methodological fingerposts and the prescriptions for impartial debate formulated in the context of criticism, for example, have not yet been described in terms of the impartiality that both pursue.

Method is also at the heart of historiography. One work in particular embodies religious controversy and historiographical innovation while being inextricably linked with the notion of impartiality: Gottfried Arnold's *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (*Impartial History of the Church and Heretics*, 1699/1700). Arnold set out to write the history of the Church as a chain of controversies that have their root in dogmatism's tendency to denounce dissenters as heretics. To do that, he assumed a point of view that was supposedly above and beyond the denominations. Yet his professed impartiality is coupled with a highly partial criticism of the antagonistic sects that obstruct true piety.<sup>66</sup> While Arnold could draw on lines of thought that conceived of religious history as a history of decline,<sup>67</sup> he demanded the impartial evaluation of sources, thus proposing a methodological innovation in church history in the form of polemic that was, paradoxically, geared against theological polemic.<sup>68</sup>

Arnold's impartial approach is widely acknowledged to have been a novelty, yet at the same time, impartiality is said to have been a core value in reflections on historiography since antiquity. History apparently subscribed to the Tacitean ideal 'sine ira et studio', commonly translated as 'without anger and partiality'. The task of the historian has been described as depicting the whole historical truth, without omissions or

<sup>65</sup> See Lécho P.-O., *Un christianisme 'sans partialité'. Irénisme et méthode chez John Dury (v. 1600–1680)* (Paris: 2011) 97–180; see also Clucas S., "In Search of 'The True Logick': Methodological Eclecticism among the 'Baconian Reformers'", in Greengrass M. – Leslie M. – Raylor T. (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reform: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: 1994) 51–74.

<sup>66</sup> Schneider H., "Der radikale Pietismus im 17. Jahrhundert" in Brecht M. (ed.), *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1. *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: 1993) 391–437, esp. 410–416.

<sup>67</sup> Dixon C.S., "Faith and History on the Eve of Enlightenment: Ernst Salomon Cyprian, Gottfried Arnold, and the *History of Heretics*", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57, 1 (2006) 33–54, here 41.

<sup>68</sup> Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung* 320 ('Streitschrift gegen theologisches Streiten').

embellishments, and Tacitus's maxim taken to express a claim to and call for 'impartial or non-party' representation that was supposedly widely accepted until the eighteenth century. Only then, apparently, was the relativity of all historical assessment recognized.<sup>69</sup>

Tacitus's phrase, however, voiced at the beginning of the *Annals* and ever since taken as a claim to freedom from bias, does not fit our modern notions of impartiality or objectivity as snugly as one might think. As T.J. Luce and other students of Tacitus and ancient historical practice have stressed, Tacitus and his fellow historians 'took a narrower and more particularized view of the problem'. Partiality was instead understood as a direct consequence of benefits gained or injustice suffered. In Roman culture, *iniuria* were identified as the cause of *ira*, *beneficia* as the cause of *studium*.<sup>70</sup> In turn, a good historian was defined by the absence of certain (understandable) inclinations, but not by a general, philosophically-motivated impartiality. This kind of bias moreover could only befall those who wrote about the recent past, and could themselves have suffered a slight or received a reward. A general notion of impartiality is conspicuously absent here, and it has been argued that Tacitus's phrase has been contaminated with modern ideas.<sup>71</sup>

If this is so, then the same can be said of humanist notions of historiography. Discussions about the historian's commitment to truth that abound in the sixteenth century's flourishing historiographical literature have been paraphrased as calls for impartiality or even objectivity.<sup>72</sup> As the modern ideals of objectivity and impartiality were as such unknown in the pre-modern era, we might ask whether the modern claim to impartiality that informs history as a discipline is not also a product of the seventeenth century when the notion was forged. More research would reveal whether, and if so, how the general fascination with impartiality in

<sup>69</sup> Koselleck R., "Standortbindung und Zeitlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur historiographischen Erschließung der geschichtlichen Welt", in Koselleck R. – Mommsen W.J. – Rüsen J. (eds.), *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Munich: 1977) 17–46, here 20 f.

<sup>70</sup> Luce T.J., "Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing", *Classical Philology* 84, 1 (1989) 16–31, here 17–18.

<sup>71</sup> See Heldmann K., *Sine ira et studio. Das Subjektivitätsprinzip der römischen Geschichtsschreibung und das Selbstverständnis antiker Historiker* (Munich: 2011) 14–15.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. the discussion in Landfester R., *Historia magistra vitae. Untersuchungen zur humanistischen Geschichtstheorie des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Geneva: 1972) 96–100. Cf. the nuanced discussion in Keßler E., "Geschichte: Menschliche Praxis oder kritische Wissenschaft? Zur Theorie humanistischer Geschichtsschreibung", in idem (ed.), *Theoretiker humanistischer Geschichtsschreibung. Nachdruck exemplarischer Texte aus dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: 1971) 7–47.

the seventeenth and eighteenth century informed debates about historiography. This might suggest that history was not, after all, an avantgarde discourse in which impartiality was a core value long before other fields of cultural and intellectual production recognized its importance, but that it too was transformed by the force of the early modern emergence of impartiality.

The contributions in this volume thus approach impartiality from a variety of perspectives. Gathering examples from a broad range of disciplines, they suggest not only that a concept of impartiality emerged with new saliency in the seventeenth century – evident both from the coining and spread of the term and its equivalents in European vernaculars, and from the various disputes and disciplinary discussions which the idea of impartial or indifferent judgement prompted – but also show some of the faultlines which made the concept so contested. Early modern writers were often conscious of impartiality as a novelty, as suggested by the examples of Wilkins, Franck, Arnold, and the writers around the Royal Society, among others. Nonetheless, its definition, and its incorporation as a methodological or disciplinary ideal, was fraught: it could be interpreted, variously, both as a retreat from partisanship and a refusal to adhere to any party, or an exercise in judicious judgement; it could be both a quality of mind, and a characteristic of a debate; it could be dissimulated, or paradoxically partisan; it could be criticized as disingenuous, inequitable, dangerous, or lazy. Associated closely with the emergence of objectivity and thus what is often called ‘the rise of science’, the contributions gathered here suggest that forging a new ideal of impartiality was also crucial in epochal shifts in religious and political discourse, print culture, and historiography and scholarly practices more generally. With such an extraordinary range of contexts and significance, we can in this volume only open the ground, rather than cover all of it. As such, however, we hope the work represented here suggests new avenues for considering the relationships between such diverse disciplinary developments, and will encourage more attention to and investigation of the emergence of impartiality.

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## 1. PREHISTORIES OF IMPARTIALITY



## TAKING SIDES AND THE PREHISTORY OF IMPARTIALITY

Anita Traninger

### 1. *Introduction: Taking Sides*

In his article “Taking Sides in Philosophy”, Gilbert Ryle inveighs against the ‘party-labels’ commonly awarded in philosophy. He impugns in particular the conventional requirement to declare to what school one belongs because ‘[t]here is no place for “isms” in philosophy’.<sup>1</sup> In concluding, however, he is prepared to make ‘a few concessions’:

Although, as I think, the motive of allegiance to a school or a leader is a non-philosophic and often an anti-philosophic motive, it may have some good results. Partisanship does generate zeal, combativeness, and team-spirit. [...] Pedagogically, there is some utility in the superstition that philosophers are divided into Whigs and Tories. For we can work on the match-winning propensities of the young, and trick them into philosophizing by encouraging them to try to “dish” the Rationalists, or “scupper” the Hedonists.<sup>2</sup>

Even though Ryle chooses to reduce the value of taking sides to a propaedeutic set-up as a helpmeet for the young to come up with striking arguments, what he describes is precisely the *modus operandi* of dialectics, which had since antiquity been the methodological basis of philosophy. Dialectics conceived of thinking as a dialogue, and an agonistic one at that: it consisted in propounding a thesis and attacking it through questions. Problems were conceived of as being a choice between two positions, whence the name the procedure received in Roman times: *in utramque partem disserere*, arguing both sides of a question or arguing pro and contra. The adversarial spirit was such that dialecticians, as Alain Michel has put it, ‘hardly ever want to speak first. Their method drives them to prefer refuting a proposition. He who responds can contradict his adversary without having to engage himself.’<sup>3</sup> It is thus no coincidence that students

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<sup>1</sup> Ryle G., “Taking Sides in Philosophy”, in idem, *Collected Papers. Vol. 2. Collected Essays 1929–1968* (London: 1971) 153–169, here 153.

<sup>2</sup> Ryle, “Taking Sides in Philosophy” 167–168.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Les dialecticiens n’aimaient guère parler en premier. Leur méthode les conduisait à préférer répondre. Celui qui répond peut contredire l’adversaire sans devoir s’engager

of philosophy can be engaged with more ease in the development of arguments when being forced to respond to an existing position.

How do these observations fit the theme of this volume? Etymologically, 'impartiality' depends on *pars* (part), and it refers precisely to the abstaining from taking sides or taking someone's part. Recent accounts of the history of objectivity have laid claim to the notion of impartiality as *ancilla obiectivitatis*, as a helpmeet to objectivity, and taken it to vouch for the core values of modern rationality.<sup>4</sup> And this history has, second, largely been told in a forward-looking, or, to put it rather more critically, teleological manner. In order to clarify the historical scope of taking sides, we will need to take a look backwards.

In what follows I will focus on one domain that did not actually develop a notion of impartiality – rather to the contrary – but supplied the fundamental argumentative techniques for taking sides: the trivial arts of rhetoric and dialectics. The ideal orator was he who had the ability to argue pro and contra a certain cause with equal zeal. While this is clearly an ideal, it betrays an underlying founding concept: that problems are given in the binary form of either/or, that all questions with regard to opinions, doctrines, or received wisdom can be decided either in the positive or in the negative. What does not figure is indecision, or, indeed, compromise.

In the context of traditional rhetoric and dialectics, impartiality is unheard of. Rhetorical and dialectical education in Antiquity, just as throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, placed a premium on the moulding of a certain versatility in pro and con discourse, not with the objective of establishing consensus or compromise, but of forging a winning argument.<sup>5</sup> And while one could argue that school training is not to be confused with the much more nuanced argumentative necessities of real life, it is beyond doubt that educational programmes do betray the intellectual framework in which both academic and public prowess are conceived.

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lui-même'. Michel A., *Rhétorique et philosophie chez Cicéron. Essai sur les fondements philosophiques de l'art de persuader* (Paris: 1960) 165 (my translation).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Gaukroger S., "The Autonomy of Natural Philosophy: From Truth to Impartiality", in Anstey P.R. – Schuster J.A. (eds.), *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century. Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy* (Dordrecht: 2005) 131–163, esp. 160–161.

<sup>5</sup> Sloane T.O., *On the Contrary: The Protocol of Traditional Rhetoric* (Washington, D.C.: 1997) 3. Sloane presents his account of traditional rhetoric as a contrarian argument in itself, insisting that rhetoric is 'ostensibly based on antagonism, hostility, strife, competitiveness, indeed all those objectionably male-oriented qualities modern education is seeking to "go beyond"'.

The task of both rhetoric and dialectics was a schooling in partiality, but a very specific kind of partiality. As the hallmark of the oral-aural culture (of knowledge) that spanned the centuries from antiquity to the seventeenth century, as Walter Ong claimed,<sup>6</sup> this enforcement of partiality was at the same time coupled with a requisite disinterestedness: how could someone argue both sides of a question, if he supported one? The rhetorical tradition thus supplies a model that shares traits with later phenomena – disinterestedness – while it at the same time privileges a diametrically opposed stance towards problems: not weighing different points of view against each other, but forcefully putting forward one side and seeing what kind of counter-argument the opposition can come up with. In short, this model stands for a tradition of – and this can only be expressed as a paradox – disinterested partiality.

Is the emergence of impartiality therefore to be seen as an offshoot or outgrowth of early modern theories of argumentation or is it rather a radical break with tradition? The question is whether the concept of impartiality grew out of a radicalisation of *in utramque partem* discourse: the conviction that every point of view can be sustained and that the search for truth thus consists in displaying all possible solutions and weighing them against each other; or whether the concept of impartiality superseded the older rhetorical techniques and marks the beginning of a new era of thinking, one which refrains from combative discourse in favour of a careful and disinterested weighing of evidence.

## 2. *Carneades and the Uses of in utramque partem disserere*

When a dispute with the town of Oropus ended in an unfavourable settlement for the Athenians that involved the payment of a hefty fine, they decided to dispatch an embassy to Rome in 155 BC to appeal their case. Surprisingly, they did not send their most respected citizens, but the leaders of the three major philosophical schools of the day: Diogenes the Stoic, Critolaus the Peripatetic, and Carneades the Academic. The three presented their case to the Senate, but what made an even bigger impact on Roman society was the public lectures all three of them gave that attracted large and enthusiastic audiences. Cato the Elder, concerned about

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<sup>6</sup> Ong W.J., *The Presence of the Word. Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven – London: 1967) 215.

the negative influence Greek fancifulness might have on Roman youth, even appealed to the Senate to accelerate its consultations in order to shorten the three Greeks' acclaimed sojourn. The philosopher who apparently drew Cato's wrath the most was Carneades, as, on consecutive days, Carneades first pleaded the case for justice, then attacked it as a folly.<sup>7</sup>

The Church father Lactantius, some 450 years later, comments on the incident in his *Divine Institutes*, and while he first appears to dismiss the speeches as mere rhetorical exercises, he is eventually very clear about what Carneades set out to demonstrate beyond the actual arguments pro and con:

[...] Carneades had been sent to Rome by the Athenians as their spokesman, and he discussed the topic of justice at length before an audience including Galba and Cato the Censor, the best speakers of the day. The next day, however, he overturned his argument with a contrary set of points, destroying the justice he had so condemned the previous day: the seriousness of a philosopher was gone, whose views should be firm and steady, replaced by that rhetorical sort of exercise which was his usual practice, of speaking on either side, so that he could refute any view put by others. [...] Carneades' intention, however, was to rebut Aristotle and Plato, the champions of justice; so he gathered all that was being said in its favour in his first speech so he could overthrow it as he did later.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the Academy had turned sceptical under Carneades's predecessor and the speeches easily qualified as testimony to this turn, Lactantius saw something in them he could relate to: the gathering of positions of an antagonist in order to refute them. Despite Carneades not having offered any indication as to which of the two positions he actually shared,

<sup>7</sup> The speeches are not extant as Carneades has left behind no writings. The most detailed précis (which is based on Cicero's *De re publica*, most of which is lost today) can be found in Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* V, 16. Cato's reaction to the embassy is reported by Plutarch and Pliny; see the references to the relevant passages and the reports by Cicero, Quintilian, and Aulus Gellius in Astin A.E., *Cato the Censor* (Oxford: 1978) 175, n. 48; on the cause and the course of the mission, see Habicht C., *Athens from Alexander to Antony*, trans. D.L. Schneider (Cambridge, MA – London: 1997) 265f.; on Carneades' rhetorical ingenuity see Usher M.D., "Carneades' Quip: Orality, Philosophy, Wit and the Poetics of Impromptu Quotation", *Oral Tradition* 21, 1 (2006) 190–209.

<sup>8</sup> Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* V, 14, 3–5: 'is [i.e. Carneades] cum legatus ab Atheniensibus Romam missus esset, disputavit de iustitia copiose audiente Galba et Catone Censorio maximis tunc oratoribus. sed idem disputationem suam postridie contraria disputatione subvertit et iustitiam quam pridie laudaverat sustulit, non quidem philosophi gravitate, cuius firma et stabilis debet esse sententia, sed quasi oratorio exercitii genere in utramque partem disserendi. [...] Carneades autem ut Aristotelen refelleret ac Platonem iustitiae patronos, prima illa disputatione collegit ea omnia, quae pro iustitia dicebantur, ut posset illa, sicut fecit, evertere'.



Lactantius interprets the whole enterprise as an endeavour in search of truth that proceeds by establishing a position and then refuting it.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to Lactantius' report, most modern scholars seem to agree that Carneades's speeches were given outside of the official mission, but in any case their topic, justice, was of immediate relevance to the case. And even though the two equally strong speeches hinted at an impasse, the Senate reached a solution swiftly and significantly reduced the Athenians' penalty. Thus while Carneades may have made a case for indecidability in line with the sceptical epistemology he propounded as the head of the new Academy, his act was successful in rhetorical terms as his audience nevertheless reached the conclusion the embassy had worked towards.

The impact Carneades's performance made on the development of Roman rhetoric can hardly be overestimated. When Cicero set out to define the perfect orator in *De oratore*, it was still Carneades who embodied the ideal qualities:

[...] if there should ever be a person who is able in Aristotelian fashion to speak on both sides about every subject and by means of knowing Aristotle's rules to reel off two speeches on opposite sides on every case [de omnibus rebus in utramque partem sententiam possit dicere], or in the manner of Arcesilas and Carneades to argue against every statement put forward, and who to that method adds the experience and practice in speaking indicated, he would be the one and only true and perfect orator.<sup>10</sup>

The reference to Carneades's performance does not of course mean that *in utramque partem disserere* always implies arguing *both* sides at once, indeed '[t]here are surely few public situations in which the sort of sceptical rhetoric practiced by Carneades is called for'.<sup>11</sup> Also, the ability to argue both sides does not automatically render the orator a Sceptic. What is required is that the orator be prepared to argue either side of a case, whichever task might be thrown at him, with equal zeal and persuasiveness. To do

<sup>9</sup> Carneades was not always judged so favourably: cf. Augustine's influential denouncement in *Contra Academicos* II, 12, 27.

<sup>10</sup> *De oratore* III, 80: 'sin aliquis existerit aliquando qui Aristotelico more de omnibus rebus in utramque partem sententiam possit dicere et in omni causa duas contrarias orationes praeceptis illius cognitis explicare, aut hoc Arcesilae modo et Carneadis contra omne quod propositum sit disserat, quique ad eam rationem adiungat hunc usum exercitationemque dicendi, is sit verus, is perfectus, is solus orator'. Translation from the Loeb edition with my changes.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkerson K.E., "Carneades at Rome: A Problem of Sceptical Rhetoric", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 21, 2 (1988) 131–144, here 141; see also Craig C.P., "The Structural Pedigree of Cicero's Speeches *Pro Archia*, *Pro Milone*, and *Pro Quinctio*", *Classical Philology* 80, 2 (1985) 136–137, here 136, n. 1.

that, *epoché* – the suspension of judgement propagated by the Sceptics – is not a requirement. As K.E. Wilkerson has put it: ‘Scepticism may have enhanced the persuasive skills of some speakers – Cicero is a possible example – by extending their resources of argument, but, as Antonius remarks, oratory itself finds its usual occupation in urging audiences to approve proposals, not to suspend their judgment.’<sup>12</sup>

Cicero, who aimed, throughout his life, at a fusion of rhetoric and philosophy or rather, at fashioning the orator as a philosopher, insisted in various places that *in utramque partem disserere* is not limited to any one of these two disciplines but is rather a mindset that encompasses both: it refers, in the most general terms, to the propounding of a thesis and opposing it, be it by attacking it through a series of questions, or by formulating an oration on the contrary view. Cicero himself attributes both the invention of the technique and the combination of rhetoric and dialectics under the umbrella of *in utramque partem disserere* to Aristotle: he trained his disciples not only to expound arguments on both sides in the plain manner of the philosophers, but to treat them with rhetorical copiousness.<sup>13</sup>

In the history of philosophy, however, it was Carneades’s predecessor as head of the Academy, Arcesilaus, who is said not only to have introduced the turn of the Academy towards scepticism, possibly influenced by the Sceptic Pyrrho, but also to have invented the technique of arguing both sides, as Diogenes Laertius reports.<sup>14</sup> Pierre Bayle, however, who in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* set out to amend the errors of earlier historians and scholars, also corrects this view in pointing out that arguing on both sides was rather the very procedure already favoured by Socrates and further pursued by Plato: Arcesilaus was, Bayle judges, certainly not an innovator.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Wilkerson, “Carneades at Rome” 142. He refers to Cicero, *De oratore* II, 159.

<sup>13</sup> Cicero, *De finibus* V, 10: ‘ab Aristoteleque principe de singulis rebus in utramque partem dicendi exercitatio est instituta [...]’. Cicero, *Orator* 46: ‘In hac [i.e. treating a question on both sides] Aristoteles adolescentis non ad philosophorum morem tenuiter disserendi, sed ad copiam rhetorum in utramque partem, ut ornatius et uberius dici possit, exercuit’.

<sup>14</sup> Diogenes Laertius IV, 6, 28. See Wilkerson, “Carneades at Rome” 136; Couissin P., “L’origine et l’évolution de l’EΠΟΧΗ”, *Revue des études grecques* 42 (1929) 373–397.

<sup>15</sup> ‘On auroit tort de prétendre qu’il [i.e. Arcesilas] n’a point été appelé à juste titre un innovateur; mais Diogene Laërce se trompe, quand il le prend pour le premier qui ait introduit la coutume de disputer de part & d’autre. [...] Ce fut l’esprit de Socrate, & Platon le conserva.’ Bayle Pierre, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 4 vols., 5th ed. (Amsterdam et al., P. Brunel et al.: 1740) Art. “Arcesilas”, 285E.

Indeed, we can already find both rhetorical and dialectical instances of contrarian argumentation in Plato's dialogues. Socrates engages with other interlocutors mainly in dialogical exchanges, but also by contrary speeches. In the *Phaidros*, he declaims two speeches on *eros* in response to a speech given by Lysias reported to him by young Phaidros (*Phaidros* 237A–241D, 243E–257B). Yet above all he is shown practicing the “Socratic elenchus”, a type of cross-examination that consisted in putting a series of questions to a person who has made a statement in order to demonstrate the inherent contradictions.<sup>16</sup>

Still, even though Aristotle claimed that he had to develop the dialectical techniques all by himself as he could not draw on any predecessors' work,<sup>17</sup> in actual fact, he was preceded not only by Plato, but by others as well. In *utramque partem* discourse both in dialectical and rhetorical terms was already supposedly taught by the Sophist Protagoras, who is said to have been the first to assert that two contrary statements could be made about any subject matter and who taught accordingly how to make the best case for either side, also having been the first to charge his students for introducing them to the method.<sup>18</sup> The oldest work that has come down to us in this regard are the *Dissoi Logoi*, a fragmentary manual for pro and con argumentation dating from the turn from the fifth to the fourth century B.C., that limits itself to listing arguments for and against certain questions.<sup>19</sup> Yet while a long tradition can be established for the practice of taking sides in rhetoric and dialectics, this brief overview indicates that the schools and teachers making use of the method were not in agreement about its objectives, and much less did they rely on it to convey the same epistemology or doctrine.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson R., *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford: 1953) ch. 2, ‘Elenchus’, 7–19. See also Cicero's characterization of disputing in *utramque partem* as the Socratic method for finding truth in Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* I, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *De sophisticis elenchis* 183b–184b. See Ryle G., “Dialectic in the Academy”, in Owen G.E.L. (ed.), *Aristotle on Dialectic: The Topics. Proceedings of the Third Symposium Aristotelicum* (Oxford: 1968) 69–79, here 70.

<sup>18</sup> Diogenes Laertius IX, 8. On Protagoras, also in the context of Plato's dialogue of the same title, see Gomperz H., *Sophistik und Rhetorik* (Leipzig: 1912) 127–200.

<sup>19</sup> The *Dissoi Logoi* (literally ‘different words’, referring to ‘differing views’) were transmitted along with the writings of Sextus Empiricus and were first seen into print by Henricus Stephanus in 1570. For the historical context and a discussion of the surviving fragments see the commentary and introduction in *Dissoi Logoi. Zweierlei Ansichten. Ein sophistischer Traktat. Text – Übersetzung – Kommentar*, ed. A. Becker – P. Scholz (Berlin: 2004).

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, made it clear that the aim of arguing on both sides was, first, not just an accidental variety, but the characteristic structural trait of both rhetoric and dialectics. And he held, second, that arguing about opposites served the objective of finding truth:

Further, one should be able to argue persuasively on either side of a question, just as in the use of syllogisms, not that we may actually do both (for one should not persuade what is debased) but in order that it may not escape our notice what the real state of the case is and that we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly. None of the other arts reasons in opposite directions; dialectic and rhetoric alone do this, for both are equally concerned with opposites.<sup>20</sup>

While the concern was the same in both arts, the respective procedures were quite different:<sup>21</sup> rhetoric called for contrasting speeches, while dialectics required the positing of a thesis, followed by attacks being brought forward against it. In dialectical training, the same theses were debated over and over again, and it was not uncommon that the same student would defend and attack the same position at different times. Rather, it was recommended practice (Aristotle, *Topica* 163b). As a consequence, '[t]he rules and codes of the elenctic disputation-match did not require that the defender of a thesis believed it to be true. His business was to produce the best possible case for it. Nor did the questioner have to believe the thesis to be false. His business was to produce the best possible case

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<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 1355a. This depends on a dual notion of truth, discussed by Aristotle in several places: truth can either be demonstrated or persuaded; it is either plausible or proven; probable or necessary. Wherever opinions are concerned, they have to be held against each other to determine their probability, see Michel, *Rhétorique et philosophie chez Cicéron*, 160. He explains further: '[...] les données de l'opinion ne peuvent guère être confrontées avec les faits, puisqu'elles sont incertaines et mal saisissables. Mais il est toujours possible de les étudier en elles-mêmes formellement, et de ne les admettre que si elles rendent au moins douteuses les affirmations qui leur sont contradictoires. Telle est l'argumentation *in utramque partem*'. Ibidem, 163. Marta Spranzi Zuber has argued that probable arguments for both sides decidedly point towards the possibility of a resolution: 'Une thèse probable n'est pas une thèse dont la vérité n'est que partielle, mais une thèse dont la vérité pourra être prouvée. La probabilité exprime donc, paradoxalement, la foi que la vérité existe, et indique en même temps une direction de recherche pour découvrir cette vérité d'une part, et pour découvrir la preuve, d'autre part'. Spranzi Zuber M., "Rhétorique, dialectique et probabilité", *Revue de synthèse* 4e sér., 2-3-4 (2001) 297-317, here 314.

<sup>21</sup> Cicero claims, however, that Aristotle taught a combination of both, and that the dialectical places presented in the *Topics* served this purpose, see Cicero, *Orator* 46: 'In hac Aristoteles adulescentis non ad philosophorum morem tenuiter disserendi, sed ad copiam rhetorum, in utramque partem ut ornatus et uberius dici posset, exercuit idemque locos – sic enim appellat – quasi argumentorum notas tradidit unde omnis in utramque partem traheretur oratio'. See also Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* XII, 2, 25.

against it.<sup>22</sup> This necessarily resulted in a certain detachment, also in emotional terms, that called for, in Ruch's beautiful translation of Cicero's formula, 'pratiquer la contradiction sans opiniâtreté & la souffrir sans colère' ('practicing contradiction without stubbornness and suffer it without anger').<sup>23</sup> Instead of personal engagement, training rather sought to habituate students to standardized situations, very much in the same way as they are practiced in football or in chess. Dialectics was as much about memorizing successful argumentative moves as about arguing, which is why Aristotle advises on how to collect and dedicate them to memory (Aristotle, *Topica* 163b1–9). Efficiency in argumentation depended not only on individual resourcefulness, but also on collaborative effort: 'Like chess-players' "combinations", lines of argumentation are public property, and a tactical improvement made by myself becomes henceforth a part of anyone else's stock of arguments for or against the same thesis.<sup>24</sup>

Thus in *utramque partem disserere* required a specific type of detachment when taking sides, but it was not a sceptical technique in itself. Even though the Academy had turned sceptical under Arcesilaus and Cicero voiced a decided sympathy for sceptic philosophy,<sup>25</sup> arguing both sides does not necessarily imply *epoché*, abstaining from judgement. Accordingly, Cicero variously discusses *in utramque partem disserere* in his works, but mostly insists that it was Aristotle who informed his understanding of the concept.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ryle, "Dialectic in the Academy" 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ruch M., "La 'Disputatio in utramque partem' dans le 'Lucullus' et ses fondements philosophiques", *Revue des études latines* 47 (1969) 310–335, here 332. 'et refellere sine pertinacia et refelli sine iracundia', Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* II, 5. See also Moraux P., "La joute dialectique d'après le huitième livre des *Topiques*", in Owen G.E.L. (ed.), *Aristotle on Dialectic: The Topics. Proceedings of the Third Symposium Aristotelicum* (Oxford: 1986) 277–311, here 279–280.

<sup>24</sup> Ryle, "Dialectic in the Academy" 75.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero himself got acquainted with the sceptical Academy through his teacher Philo of Larissa, who headed the fourth and last Academy. See Reinhardt T., "Rhetoric in the Fourth Academy", *The Classical Quarterly* n.s. 50, 2 (2000) 531–547.

<sup>26</sup> See Long A.A., *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: 2006) ch. "Cicero's Plato and Aristotle", 285–306, here 302. For an overview of the passages where Cicero and Quintilian discuss *in utramque partem disserere* see Granatelli R., "L'in utramque partem disserendi exercitatio nell'evoluzione del pensiero retorico e filosofico dell'antichità", *Vichiana* 3a ser. 1/1–2 (1990) 165–181. On Cicero's self-fashioning as a teacher of *in utramque partem disserere* in both rhetoric and dialectics in the vein of Aristotle see Nickau K., "Peripateticorum consuetudo. Zu Cic. Tusc. 2,9", in Döpp S. (ed.), *Antike Rhetorik und ihre Rezeption. Symposium zu Ehren von Prof. Dr. Carl Joachim Classen D. Litt. Oxon. am 21. und 22. November 1998 in Göttingen* (Stuttgart: 1999) 15–28, esp. 16–19.

The appeal of the technique of arguing contraries by far exceeded the specifically philosophical reflection on deciding issues, and informed unlikely fields of teaching such as grammar. Instead of choosing, say, the didactic dialogue, Publius Cornelius Varro organized his *De lingua latina* (most of which is lost today) as a series of contrarian arguments.<sup>27</sup> Admittedly, this was the first and only time such a disposition was attempted by a grammarian in antiquity, but Varro's sequence of pro and con arguments, interspersed by authorial interventions that weigh the contrarian positions, points to a far-reaching fascination with the method.

After all, scepticism itself appears to have depended on a contrarian impulse. Carneades and the Academic Sceptics were mostly motivated by countering the other philosophical schools and in particular the Stoics, who held that there was certainty in sense perception.<sup>28</sup> Carneades is reported by Diogenes Laertius to have exclaimed: 'Without Chrysippus [the leader of the Stoa] where should I have been?'<sup>29</sup>

If arguing on both sides was adopted by the Sceptics to counter dogmatism, it is all the more surprising that the mother of all dogmatic enterprises, medieval theology, should take up precisely this procedure as its preferred method.

### 3. *Taking Sides and Scholastic Disputation*

Teaching at the medieval university revolved around the *quaestio*, which informed engagement with texts, magisterial teaching, as well as learned debate, the *disputatio*.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ax W., "Disputare in utramque partem. Zum literarischen Plan und zur dialektischen Methode Varros in de lingua Latina 8–10", *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 138 (1995) 146–177.

<sup>28</sup> Wilkerson, "Carneades at Rome" 131. For the debates between Academics and Stoics see also Allen J., "Carneadean Argument in Cicero's Academic Books", in Inwood B. – Mansfeld J. (eds.), *Assent and Argument: Studies in Cicero's Academic Books. Proceedings of the 7th Symposium Hellenisticum (Utrecht, August 21–25, 1995)* (Leiden – New York – Cologne: 1997) 217–256.

<sup>29</sup> Diogenes Laertius IV, 9, 62.

<sup>30</sup> A question could be the starting point or, in a different sense, the result of a disputation: the *quaestio disputata* appears to have emerged as an edited compilation of the pro and contra arguments forwarded in a debate, but nevertheless it is not transcript of the debate, and apparently the genre soon became quite independent of actual disputations. See Marenbon J., *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350)* (London – New York: 1991) 28–31.

Gilbert of Poitiers (ca. 1075–1154) very early in its development laid down the conditions under which a question would qualify as a scholastic *quaestio*: not all disagreements give rise to a *quaestio*, he says in his commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*. If one of the sides cannot be substantiated with probable arguments or if it is not possible to argue for the truth of the one and the falseness of the other side, there is no *quaestio* to be disputed. Only if there is a question where both sides are equally probable ('cuius vero utraque pars argumenta veritatis habere videtur'), thus only if there is justified doubt, a *quaestio* emerges.<sup>31</sup> This definition clearly set a standard to which dialecticians did not adhere in practice. As Brian Lawn has commented, '[...] we find the *quaestio*, especially in Paris, escaping from the narrow bounds of this definition and embracing every kind of enunciation, even statements about which no doubt at all seemed to exist'.<sup>32</sup> The predilection with taking sides, inherited from antiquity, was thus taken to new heights in scholastic culture as a general principle of reflection and teaching.

Thanks to the research of Olga Weijers and others it is well known today that disputation, as it took shape in the medieval university, differs from ancient practice and also cannot be explained in its entirety as being derived from the Aristotelian *Organon*.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless it does, of course, take up syllogistic reasoning as expounded in the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, and it also imports some aspects of the pragmatics of dispute as set out in the *Topics*. The constellation of 'questioner' and 'answerer' that informs Aristotle's *Topics* was transformed into a three-part set-up: a presiding master; a *respondens*, who is supposed to defend the master's position; and an *opponens*, who comes forward with attacks.<sup>34</sup> In particular, the role of *opponens* has to be understood as a function that could be adopted by a group of scholars in one particular disputation. Yet while

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert of Poitiers, *Commentaria*, in *Patrologia Latina* 64, 1258A. See on this Grabmann M., *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, 2 vols. (Berlin: 1956, reprint of the ed. Freiburg i.Br.: 1911) vol. II, 424–430.

<sup>32</sup> Lawn B., *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic 'Quaestio Disputata', with Special Emphasis on its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden – New York – Cologne: 1993) 12.

<sup>33</sup> For a brief account see Weijers O., "De la joute dialectique à la dispute scolastique", *Académie des Inscriptions & Belles Lettres. Comptes-rendus des séances* (1999) no. 2, 509–518.

<sup>34</sup> On the history of *opponens* and *respondens* as roles in disputation cf. Bazàn B.C., "Les questions disputées, principalement dans les facultés de théologie", in idem et al. (eds.), *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine* (Turnhout: 1985) 21–147, here 39–42.



scholastic disputation involves more than two discussants, it is nevertheless concerned with contrasting two sides.

A question, which typically has the form “whether . . . or” (“*utrum . . . an*”) is answered either in the negative or in the positive in a series of theses. These are propounded one after another by the *respondens* and duly attacked, one after the other, by the *opponens*. A disputation is thus not centered around a question that demands and receives an answer, but one of two possible answers to that question is tested in a collaborative effort. It thus does not come as a surprise that the schoolmen began to leave out the question altogether and turned straight to writing theses as the starting point for debate.<sup>35</sup>

In the setting of the university, one could be asked to act as a respondent or opponent at any time. Again, this entailed an ability to separate the task of producing the strongest possible argument from any desire to make a case for personal convictions. And again, a premium was put on the ability of being equally able to defend or oppose a particular thesis. This kind of disinterested partiality was the rule, and not the exception,<sup>36</sup> as is illustrated by the fact that satire could mock the schoolmen's pride in their intellectual flexibility as a matter of course.

Thomas More, in a letter to Maarten van Dorp dating from October 1515, recounts an anecdote about a theologian who attends a formal dinner and finds himself in the company of a wealthy and educated Italian merchant. The theologian's *déformation professionnelle* of arguing contraries detrimentally informs his take on light conversation: first, he counters whatever is being said over dinner with a syllogism to prove that the opposite was true. He even prides himself on being ready to debate any topic *in utramque partem* ('*professus est enim se, in utramque partem, de re quacunque disputaturum*').<sup>37</sup> As the merchant brings up topics with doctrinal implications (interest, tithes, confession) and eventually talks about extramarital affairs, the theologian is all the more piqued. And when the

<sup>35</sup> Chang K., “From Oral Disputation to Written Text: The Transformation of the Dissertation in Early Modern Europe”, *History of Universities* 19, 2 (2004) 129–187, here 135.

<sup>36</sup> Medieval textbooks are notoriously silent about both the precise procedure of disputation and its pragmatic implications. It is often scattered asides that illustrate what people thought they were doing. For example, in a letter to his bishop, Johannes Eck ridicules a participant in a disputation who naively thought that all the propositions brought forward by Eckius (Eck refers to himself in the third person) were indeed his personal convictions ('*infantiliter existimasset omnia per Eckium in disputatione proposita eius fuisse sententiae tanquam asserta et ab eo firmiter tenta*'). See Eck Johannes, *Briefwechsel*, ed. V. Pfnür (online edition: <http://ivv7srv15.uni-muenster.de/mnkg/pfnuer/Eck-Briefe.html>) Ep. 32.

<sup>37</sup> More Thomas, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven et al.: 1963–) vol. XV, 50–52.



merchant begins to quote fictitious references, having noticed that the theologian was not quite proficient in Holy Writ, the theologian nevertheless manages to refute every single point. How did he do it? Even though he did not even know what the merchant was talking about, he destroyed every single argument by finding logical fault with it.

In the *Letters of Obscure Men*, it is again table talk that serves as a backdrop for an anecdote about *in utramque partem disserere*. A certain Johannes Strausfederius relates a scene to Ortwin Gratianus where a nobleman ‘scandalizavit’ the *magister noster* Petrus Meyer by calling Johannes Reuchlin the greater scholar. Meyer bristles at such ignorance, denouncing Reuchlin as only dabbling in theology ‘sicut unus puer’ (‘like a boy’). In order to justify the nobleman’s praise, Reuchlin would have to present a theological *quaestio* to Meyer and defend both the pro and the contra positions (‘Ipse deberet mihi proponere unam quaestionem in Theologia, et deberet arguere pro et contra’).<sup>38</sup> Thus disputation as such, but in particular the ability to engage in it no matter what the case to be defended may be, are the only possible hallmarks that would give proof of Reuchlin’s learning.

We should not let these satirical takes, which aim at portraying the scholastics as an uncultivated and small-minded lot, obscure the liberties the old university extended to its members. These liberties were closely linked to this habitus of separating argument from conviction, of privileging the mulling over *sententiae* above exchanging personal views: ‘A master might venture almost any idea or opinion *narrando, dubitando, inquirendo* or *querendo*. In presenting the arguments or doctrines of his philosophical authorities, he customarily used the terms *recitare, disserere, declarare*. Only when a personal and formal solution was reached did masters use the words *asserere* and *determinare*’.<sup>39</sup> Speech acts in the context of the university were thus of two types: utterances made *disputative* or *scholastice* were, as it were, suspended until the utterer would assert a certain position; only then speaking *assertive* and thus accepting accountability and responsibility for it.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*, ed. A. Bömer, 2 vols. (Aalen: 1978, reprint of the ed. Heidelberg: 1924), vol. I, 5, II, 13–15, the quotations on p. 14. For the Latin supposedly spoken by theologians that is caricatured in the *Epistolae*, see Kivistö S., *Creating Anti-Eloquence: Epistolae obscurorum virorum and the Humanist Polemics on Style* (Helsinki: 2002).

<sup>39</sup> McLaughlin M.M., *Intellectual Freedom and its Limitations in the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: 1977) 67.

<sup>40</sup> See on this Traninger A., “Disputative, non assertive posita. Zum Aussagestatus disputatorischer Thesen”, in Vollhardt F. (ed.), *Religiöser Nonkonformismus und frühneuzeitliche*

It was clearly the objective of dialectical teaching, which was at the core of the beginners' curriculum in the arts faculties, to convey the ability to argue for or against any proposed thesis. This was not only the precept of the medieval dialecticians, but it was equally stressed by those authors who were pushed by humanists to replace the old textbooks such as Petrus Hispanus' *Summulae logicales*. George of Trebizond, the Byzantine scholar whose little manual on dialectics was written before 1440 and then seen into print for the first time in Paris by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1506, holds to this very scope for dialectics: 'It is thus the fruit of the whole art of dialectics to dispute in this way about any topic on both sides'.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. *The Age of Contraries: Renaissance Takes on Taking Sides*

Renaissance dialogue was conceived as a classically-oriented, humanist antithesis to scholastic disputation.<sup>42</sup> As such, however, it was not exactly an alternative model for face-to-face debate, but rather a revival of a classical literary genre that was not only bound to the medium of writing, but depended heavily on intertextual references and was in fact a *mise-en-scène* of oral exchange in the medium of writing along the stylistic lines of classical literature. Dialogue is a fictional genre which, even though it is traditionally concerned with philosophical and theoretical questions, belongs to the literary sphere as opposed to the social practice of scholastic disputation.

Within this framework, dialogue adopted and advanced the mode of *in utramque partem disserere*, albeit to serve very different ends. Again, the method fitted a new setting with ease despite its being born of very different intentions. The genre of dialogue lent itself to staging debates without having to resolve them, to producing ambiguity by contrasting opinions without having to present a definitive conclusion. Leonardo Bruni's *Dia-*

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*Gelehrtenkultur: Akademische Netzwerke und Formen praktizierter Toleranz* (Berlin: 2013, forthcoming).

<sup>41</sup> 'Est autem fructus totius artis dialecticae, huiusmodo de re aliqua in utramque partem disputare'. Georgius of Trebizond, *Utilissimus de re dialectica libellus, diligentius multo quam antehac unquam recognitus et emendatus, cum scholiis Iohannis Nouiomagi* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1966, reprint of the ed. Cologne, Eucharius: 1539) 193. On Trebizond's *Dialectica* see further Monfasani J., *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: 1976) 294–337.

<sup>42</sup> See Traninger A., *Disputation, Deklamation, Dialog. Medien und Gattungen europäischer Wissensverhandlungen zwischen Scholastik und Humanismus* (Stuttgart: 2012) 237–241, 256–270.

*logi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, two dialogues written in 1401 and 1406, are widely held to be the first incarnation of Renaissance dialogue and provided a hugely influential model for following generations. The two dialogues supposedly recount events that took place at the house of the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati on two subsequent days: a debate between the chancellor himself, Niccolò Niccoli, Roberto Rossi, and Leonardo Bruni on the state of literature and learning in their day. In the first dialogue, Niccolò Niccoli first refuses to engage in debate at all, given the debased state of learning, but is then persuaded to take part in a 'disputation'. In a polished speech modelled on classical patterns he lashes out at his contemporaries as well as at the *tre corone* of Italian literature, the poets Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, for their various shortcomings. The next day, Niccoli admits that he had only taken a critical stance in order to provoke Salutati to contradict him, and then comes forward with praise for the three poets.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, *in utramque partem disserere* is, in a technical sense, a device of intellectual provocation that is essential for advancing the debate.<sup>44</sup> But the highlighting of debate as such by staging contradictory, classicising speeches serves a greater purpose, as Bernd Häsner has shown: exhibiting and at the same time helping to bring about a humanist culture of communication.<sup>45</sup>

As a vehicle of promoting an emerging humanist culture, *ethos* plays an important role especially in the early dialogues of the fifteenth century. They often portray prominent contemporaries as interlocutors and thus set the stage for another type of arguing contraries: real-life convictions could be contrasted with positions defended in the dialogue. Niccoli acted in Carneadean fashion in Bruni's dialogue, and as he left no writings behind that would allow for construing his genuine opinion, generations of scholars were left debating which of his two speeches was the "fabricated"

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<sup>43</sup> Bruni Leonardo, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, ed. S.U. Baldassarri (Florence: 1994).

<sup>44</sup> David Marsh characterizes *in utramque partem disserere* as a 'neo-Ciceronian device of assuming a position to promote debate': Marsh D., *The Quattrocento Dialogue. Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, MA – London: 1980) 30. See also Batkin L.M., *Die italienische Renaissance. Versuch einer Charakterisierung eines Kulturtyps* (Frankfurt a.M. – Basel: 1981) 278 f.

<sup>45</sup> See the excellent discussion in Häsner B., "Leonardo Brunis *Dialogus ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*: Darstellung und Selbstkonstruktion einer humanistischen Kommunikationskultur", in Hempfer K.W. (ed.), *Möglichkeiten des Dialogs. Struktur und Funktion einer literarischen Gattung zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance in Italien* (Stuttgart: 2002) 115–161.

one and which was “genuine”. This disjunction fuels the discussion in other cases as well: in Poggio Bracciolini’s *De avaritia* (1428) it is a group of secretaries from the Roman curia that makes up the cast of characters. Antonio Loschi is given the task to speak in favour of avarice, and it is within the dialogue itself that it is remarked that this was a most strange task for Loschi, to whom avarice was foreign.<sup>46</sup> *In utramque partem disserere* thus serves as a vehicle of blurring the borders between world and text.<sup>47</sup>

Renaissance dialogue is characterized by a polyphony of voices that resists being subsumed or homogenized to express one ‘message’ of the text. Of course there are dialogues that introduce authoritative, usually senior characters whose task it is to weigh the arguments brought forward and pronounce a judgement. Yet the opposing views, once elaborated, remain prevalent, and their fundamental disparity does not disappear. Dialogue exhibits differing positions and thrives on the ‘irreducible ambiguity’ that is thus produced.<sup>48</sup>

It was not only dialogue, however, that thrived on the model of contrarian argumentation in the Renaissance. Joel Altman has argued that it was the rhetorical model of *in utramque partem dicere* that informed the emergence of early modern theatre in the Tudor age.<sup>49</sup> And there was of course the reinvigorated genre of declamation, dating back to the Roman Empire, that was, under the premise of contrarian discourse, reconfigured to rival scholastic disputation.

In 1506, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More occupied themselves with translating Lucian’s declamation *Tyrannicida* from Greek into Latin. Lucian’s text belongs the genre of *controversia*, one of the two principal types of Roman declamation. *Controversiae* were fictional pleadings in imaginary court cases that were elaborated with a view to fictional laws, while the second type, *suasoriae*, was concerned with providing fictional counsel with regard to decisive moments in history. In both cases it was required that the declamator take on a role, either that of the advocate,

<sup>46</sup> Poggio Bracciolini, “De avaricia”, in Garin E. (ed.), *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento* (Milan – Naples: 1952) 248–301, here 276.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Häsner B., “Der Dialog: Strukturelemente einer Gattung zwischen Fiktion und Theoriebildung”, in Hempfer K.W. (ed.), *Poetik des Dialogs. Aktuelle Theorie und rinascimentales Selbstverständnis* (Stuttgart: 2004) 13–65, esp. 42–47.

<sup>48</sup> Hempfer K.W., “Zur Interdependenz und Differenz von ‘Dialogisierung’ und ‘Pluralisierung’ in der Renaissance”, in Müller J.-D. – Oesterreicher W. – Vollhardt F. (eds.), *Pluralisierungen. Konzepte zur Erfassung der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin – New York: 2010) 71–94, here 79f.

<sup>49</sup> Altman J.B., *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: 1978) esp. 107–129, 389–395.

or that of the political advisor.<sup>50</sup> The *argumentum* of Lucian's *Tyrannicida* starts from the premise that a bounty has been put on the head of the ruling tyrant. An intruder enters the palace with the intention to kill the tyrant. He does not find him, however, and instead kills the tyrant's son, leaving behind his sword next to the corpse. When the tyrant finds his dead son, he is overwhelmed by sorrow and kills himself with the sword. The son's murderer claims the bounty.<sup>51</sup> In Lucian's treatment of the case, the murderer himself appears before the court of law to defend his cause. Both Erasmus and More set out to counter Lucian and independently wrote the opposing plea. But while Lucian could shine in building a case for an apparently hopeless cause, they were left with formulating a common sense argument, that the son's murderer does not deserve to be rewarded. Erasmus and More thus entered a competition for the better argument both with each other and with a long deceased author, taking sides in a case that never was.<sup>52</sup>

Such a contest across the ages may have catered to the humanists' desire to directly engage with venerated classical authors, but it was nonetheless not this model that became dominant in the Renaissance. Rather, declamation was one of the very few genres that were radically reconfigured in the Renaissance.<sup>53</sup>

Some of Erasmus's most influential texts on topical issues were published bearing the label 'declamatio': from the *Praise of Folly*, the *Praise*

<sup>50</sup> See Bonner S.F., *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (Liverpool: 1969); Fairweather J., *Seneca the Elder* (Cambridge: 1981). The most important source is the fragments collected in Seneca L. Annaeus (maior), *Declamations in two volumes*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom (Cambridge, MA – London: 1974).

<sup>51</sup> Because of contrived cases such as this, declamation was criticized by Quintilian for being too far removed from reality, not that this would have changed the practice in any significant way; see on this in particular Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* II, 10, 2; on declamation in general Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* II, 10, 1–15 and X, 5, 14–18.

<sup>52</sup> More, *The Complete Works* vol. 3/1, 94–127; Erasmus, ASD I-1, 379–627 and CWE 29, 77–123. That Erasmus and More should compete with regard to the *Tyrannicida* happened on More's initiative, see Thompson C.R., "Introduction", in More, *The Complete Works* vol. III,1, xxx. More also prompted Juan Luis Vives to respond to (Pseudo-)Quintilian's declamation *Paries palmatus*, which he did in 1521; it was usually published together with his *Declamationes Syllanae* under the title *Declamationes sex*, see Vives Juan Luis, *Opera omnia*, ed. G. Mayans y Siscar, 8 vols. (Valencia, Benito Monfort: 1782–1790), vol. II, 484–500.

<sup>53</sup> Van der Poel M.G.M., "Humanist Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Classical Mastery?", in Verbaal W. – Maas Y. – Papy J. (eds.), *The Continuity of Latin Literature* (Leiden et al.: 2006) 119–137, here 129. The most complete survey of early modern declamations, which also covers the genre's revival as a school exercise, is van der Poel M.G.M., *De declamatio bij de humanisten. Bijdrage tot de studie van de functies van de rhetorica in de Renaissance* (Nieuwkoop: 1987).

of Marriage (*Encomium matrimonii*), and the *Querela pacis* to his treatise on the necessity of an early liberal education for children (*De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis*). This choice of genre as a frame for bringing arguments to the fore, however, is not without irony and can only be understood with regard both to the tradition of arguing contraries and the insitutional setting of the late-medieval university. Declamation, as Erasmus understood it, was characterized precisely by the separation of the voice of the real-world author and a fictive *persona* that was created by the text itself and to whom, by definition, all assertions made in the text were to be attributed. At the same time, declamation was promoted, by Erasmus and others, as a genre that allowed for voicing dissent, for putting forward radical or unheard-of positions.<sup>54</sup>

In order to create a framework for this liberty, disjunction of authorial stance and textual message was claimed to be equivalent to the freedom granted to philosophers in disputation. When the Paris theologian Josse Clichtove, a long-term collaborator of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, denounced Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii* (written in the 1490s, printed 1518) in his *Propugnaculum Ecclesie aduersus Lutheranos* (1526) as of a kind with Luther's erroneous doctrine,<sup>55</sup> Erasmus laid claim to the generic conventions of declamation in his defence. His endorsement of marriage was not rendered in his capacity as a monk, he claimed, but as a fictional layman who encouraged another layman to marry: 'You must not imagine Erasmus speaking to someone else, but a layman to another layman'.<sup>56</sup> More generally, Erasmus demanded that the very freedom in argumentation granted to academic disputation should apply equally to declamation: the thinking through of heterodox positions. The liberties that come with 'speaking as a philosopher' (in disputation, thus speaking *disputative* and not *assertive*) should equally be granted to the declaimer.<sup>57</sup> When Agrippa of Nettesheim, in the *Apologia* for his *Declamation on the vanity*

<sup>54</sup> For more details and examples see Traninger, *Disputation, Deklamation, Dialog* 111–235.

<sup>55</sup> Clichtove Josse, *Propugnaculum ecclesiae aduersus Lutheranos* (Cologne, Godefridus Hittorpius: 1526) ch. 32–34.

<sup>56</sup> 'ne imagineris Erasmus alteri loqui, sed laicum laico': Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Dilutio eorum quae Iodocus Clithoveus scripsit aduersus declamationem Desiderii Erasmi Roterdami suasoriam matrimonii* (1532), ed. É.V. Telle (Paris: 1968) 82.

<sup>57</sup> 'Qui inter Theologos proferunt *Aristotelis* placita ex diametro pugnancia cum doctrina *Christi*, sat habent dicere, loquor ut *Philosophus*'. Erasmus, *Appendix de scriptis Iodoci Clithovei* (1526), LB 9, 813A. 'In concertationibus scholasticis etiamsi quid dicitur repugnans catholicae ueritati, satis est dicere, Nunc loquor ut philosophus: et mihi nihil proderit vociferanti, Loquor ut rhetor?' Erasmus, *Dilutio* 71.



and uncertainty of the sciences of 1533, claims that declamation does not dogmatize, it is not the probability of his arguments he refers to; instead he establishes a direct link to the scholastic habit of creating a space for testing arguments in disputation.<sup>58</sup>

Even if early modern declamation had the form of a monological text, it typically implicitly responded to a contrary position: that of commonly held opinion. This is why early modern declamations were quite frequently labelled 'paradoxa', literally the propounding of a thesis 'against the general consensus'.<sup>59</sup> Paradox, not least by way of its etymology, always points to an *in utramque partem* discourse even if just one side of the question is argued. There is a vast (yet mostly uncharted) literature belonging to a wide palette of early modern disciplines that indicates a contrarian stance by employing the term 'paradox'. To name but a few: the legacy of Varro's singular attempt at presenting grammatical questions by arguing them on both sides, discussed above, is taken up by Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas, called El Brocense, who presented three questions of grammar as paradoxes that he argued against common opinion. John Donne's *Biathanatos* is described on the title page as 'A declaration of that paradoxe, or thesis, that self-homicide is not so naturally sin, that it may never be otherwise'. The reformer Johannes Oecolampadius presented the new theology of confession as a paradox, arguing that contrary to common opinion it does not have to be burdensome; and of course the emerging culture of experiment dealt with observations that were opposed to received opinion, resulting in works such as Robert Boyle's *Paradoxa hydrostatica* or his *The Sceptical Chymist: or chymico-physical doubts & paradoxes*.<sup>60</sup> It is

<sup>58</sup> Agrippa of Nettesheim Heinrich Cornelius, *Apologia aduersus calumnias propter Declamationem de Vanitate scientiarum* (Cologne: 1533), fol. Iv v; the *Apologia* was published in defense of *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum declamatio inuectiva, qua universa illa sophorum gigantomachia plus quam Herculea impugnat audacia, doceturque nusquam certi quicquam, perpetui, et divini nis solidis dei eloquiis atque eminentia verbi dei latere* (Cologne: Eucharius 1531). Van der Poel, M.G.M., *Cornelius Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian and His Declamations* (Leiden – New York– Cologne 1997) 170, interprets this passage as addressing declamation's engagement with probable arguments.

<sup>59</sup> It is the dialectical notion of "thesis" that is relevant here, the view of an expert against common opinion (Aristotle, *Topica* 104b19–105a2, cf. Moraux "La joute dialectique" 279), not the rhetorical term that refers to general questions as opposed to cases that involve circumstantial particulars (Cicero, *De inventione* I, 6, 8., cf. Thom H., *Die Thesis. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Entstehung und Geschichte* [Paderborn: 1932]).

<sup>60</sup> Sánchez de las Brozas Francisco, *Paradoxa* (Antwerp, Christophe Plantin: 1582); Donne John, *Biathanatos* (London, Humphrey Moseley: 1648); Oecolampadius Johannes, *Quod non sit onerosa Christianis confessio paradoxon* (Augsburg, Sigismund Grimm – Marcus Wyrung: 1521); Boyle Robert, *Paradoxa hydrostatica* (Oxford, Henry Hall: 1669) Boyle Rob-

important to highlight this tradition as “paradox” has, in modern scholarship, become associated with paradoxical argumentation in the sense of a logical self-contradiction on the one hand and has been reduced to the so-called paradoxical encomium in the vein of Sophists such as Favorinus of Arelate on the other.<sup>61</sup> The Second Sophistic had pushed the boundaries of contrarian argument by arguing against common opinion in those fields where it appeared unshakeable, making the case mostly *for* things that were commonly despised such as quartain fever, the flea, baldness, or the water-closet. While this tradition has borne a wealth of serio-comic texts in the early modern period,<sup>62</sup> it is but a variant of the wider sense of paradoxical discourse.

Even before declamation was re-established and re-configured in the early 1600s, *in utramque partem* discourse figured in a different sense in Erasmus’s thinking. In 1499, when Erasmus and John Colet were both at Oxford, they engaged in a discussion about the meaning of Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane. Erasmus sided with the traditional authorities in holding that it was Christ’s human nature that made him express his fear. Colet, on the other hand, went for a more far-fetched interpretation in arguing that Christ was concerned with the guilt that would fall upon the Jews for his death. The conversation was interrupted, but continued in correspondence.<sup>63</sup> Erasmus recounts how he took Colet’s advice to heart and thought through the opposing interpretations:

So I was happy, dear Colet, to follow your instructions: I went over the whole discussion again privately and looked at it in a harder and more concentrated way, freeing myself from every shred of prejudice while I put together and weighed the arguments on both sides; indeed I altered things round so as to adopt your arguments exactly as if they were my own and criticize my own no less severely than if they had been yours. Nevertheless, in spite of

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ert, *The Sceptical Chymist: or chymico-physical doubts & paradoxes* (Oxford, Henry Hall for Richard Davis: 1680).

<sup>61</sup> Both can be traced to Colie R., *Paradoxia epidemica. The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, NJ: 1966) 5f. On Favorinus as a champion of adoxographical discourse see Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XVII, 12, 1–2; Pease A.S., “Things without Honor”, *Classical Philology* 21 (1926), S. 27–42.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. the collection Dornau (Dornavius) Caspar, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae Socraticae ioco-seriae*, ed. R. Seidel (Goldbach: 1995, reprint of the ed. Hanau: 1619).

<sup>63</sup> See, on this exchange and its relation to received theological positions, Seebohm F., *The Oxford Reformers. John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More. Being a History of their Fellow-Work* (London et al.: 1913) 116–125.



these measures I was visited by no new considerations, and repented nothing I had said.<sup>64</sup>

Erasmus's silent exercise is representative of the all-pervading spirit of arguing contraries of his time and age,<sup>65</sup> but at the same time, by its virtue of being a disinterested, though contrived, mulling over arguments, points forward in history to what would later be defined as a requirement for objectivity, an objective account being 'impartial, one which could ideally be accepted by any subject, because it does not draw on any assumptions, prejudices, or values of particular subjects'.<sup>66</sup> Here, we are not dealing with a rhetorical or dialectical performance, but with an interiorisation of taking sides that consciously tries to prevent bias and prejudice. But the old spirit of *in utramque partem disserere*, despite apparent harbingers such as this, did not transition into modernity all that smoothly.

### 5. *Turning against Taking Sides*

If anything, the Renaissance instances of contrarian argumentation show traces of an anti-dogmatism that scholars have associated with academic scepticism in the Carneadean vein. Yet the rediscovery of the writings of Sextus Empiricus, published in Latin translation in 1562 and 1569, introduced quite a different kind of scepticism that came to be known as Pyrrhonism. Richard Popkin has famously argued that European scholars from Savonarola to Bayle were, as a consequence, shaken by a 'pyrrhonian crisis'.<sup>67</sup> Popkin's history and studies in its wake have, however, tended to

<sup>64</sup> *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, CWE 1 *Epistola* 109, 207. 'Itaque monitis tuis, mi Colete, libenter sum obsequutus, remque totam mecum animo repetens paulo sum fixius pressiusque contemplatus; deposito omni studio rationes utriusque componens atque expendens, imo permutatione facta, ut tuis perinde ac meis fauerem, et meas non minus acriter quam si tuae fuissent excuterem. Mihi tamen inter haec neque novi quicquam in mentem venit neque cuiusquam quod dixerim poenituit.' *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P.S. Allen et al., 12 vols. (Oxford: 1906–1958) *Epistola* 109, 250.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind* 34. Altman also shows that '[t]his method of inquiry was not simply "in the air"' but was rather a staple of Tudor (and, one might add, early-modern European) school education: see *ibid.* 43–53. See also Clark D.L., "The Rise and Fall of Progymnasmata in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Grammar Schools", *Speech Monographs* 9, 19 (1952) 259–263.

<sup>66</sup> See Gaukroger S., "Objectivity, History of", in Smelser N.J. (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam: 2001) 10785–10789, here 10785.

<sup>67</sup> Popkin R., *The History of Scepticism. From Savonarola to Bayle*, revised and expanded ed. (Oxford: 2003, 1960). The difference between Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism is addressed by Sextus Empiricus himself, who argues that while the Academics argued that

overstate scepticism's reach. There is no doubt that Pyrrhonism made an impact on European debates about the conditions of knowledge; scholars who do acknowledge the topicality of scepticism in the early modern period nevertheless deny it the all-encompassing appeal Popkin and his followers had ascribed to it.<sup>68</sup>

The debates surrounding Hugo Grotius' *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres* (1625) may serve as a case in point. In the preface to his treatise, which advances the notion of a common law that is binding for all nations in war and peace, Grotius makes it clear that he argues against a commonly held belief, and he chooses to see it represented by one figure: 'But that we may avoid Confusion in disputing with a Multitude, let us allow them an Advocate; and who fitter than Carneades, who arrived at that height and perfection of Eloquence, that he could plead as strongly for Error, as for Truth [...].'<sup>69</sup> Much has been made of this choice of adversary, culminating in the interpretation that it is scepticism as such that Grotius actually wants to counter with his book.<sup>70</sup> But as other critics have observed, there is no explicit engagement with scepticism, and the few who propounded Pyrrhonian ideas at the time would not qualify as the 'multitude' at which Grotius takes aim. Rather, as Thomas Mautner has shown, Grotius follows the model of *in utramque partem* discourse by seeking out an antagonist and inveighing against the thesis he propounded. Even though Carneades's speeches are, as we have seen above, extant in only the most mediated way, he is, for Grotius, the strongest possible opponent because of his rhetorical prowess. It is thus Carneades's second speech where he denounced justice in international relations that provides the foil against which Grotius develops his argument.<sup>71</sup>

Richard Popkin has offered a narrative of a sceptical crisis that unsettled European thought in the early modern period and that modern

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everything was inapprehensible, Sceptics even refuse to pass judgement on this question, expecting that some things could be apprehended. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. J. Annas – J. Barnes (Cambridge: 2000) I, 33.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. e.g. Perler D., "Was there a 'Pyrrhonian Crisis' in Early Modern Philosophy? A Critical Notice of Richard H. Popkin", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86 (2004) 209–220; Maclean I., "The 'Sceptical Crisis' Reconsidered: Galen, Rational Medicine and the *libertas philosophandi*", *Early Modern Science of Medicine* 11, 3 (2006) 247–274.

<sup>69</sup> Grotius Hugo, *Three books treating of the rights of war & peace*, trans. William Evats (London, M.W. for Thomas Basset and Ralph Smith: 1682) iii.

<sup>70</sup> See Tuck R., "Grotius, Carneades and Hobbes", *Grotiana* n.s. 4 (1983) 43–62; favourable responses to Tuck's thesis are discussed by Mautner T., "Grotius and the Sceptics", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, 4 (2005), 577–601, here 580–582.

<sup>71</sup> Mautner, "Grotius and the Sceptics" 582, 587 ff.

philosophy sought to overcome in a forceful counter-attack, one in which 'modern philosophers emerged as so many Saint Georges, prepared to slay the sceptical dragon'.<sup>72</sup> Quentin Skinner, on the other hand, has put forward the thesis that it was not so much scepticism against which modern philosophy rebelled, but the practice of taking sides and reasoning *in utramque partem*. He argued his case mostly with a view to Hobbes and his promotion of 'civil science' and stressed that Hobbes's stance was not against scepticism, as several scholars have argued, but rather the 'rhetorical culture of Renaissance humanism within which the vogue for scepticism had developed'.<sup>73</sup> In forging taking sides as a practice brought about by humanism, Skinner understates both its longevity and its scope: as the discussion in this article has shown, this is a long-standing phenomenon that is not confined to rhetoric, but that spans the methodological bases of all scholarship before modernity, rhetoric *and* dialectics. Also, the ousting of *in utramque partem* discourse was not a straightforward process, but manifested itself in partly confused – and confusing – twists and turns. This is a history that has yet to be written, and I will, in concluding, address only a few significant instances.

Petrus Ramus, who sought to position himself against Aristotle and Aristotelianism, propounded a reformed dialectics which reduced and rearranged the traditional precepts. In this framework of anti-Aristotelianism, Ramus's collaborator or, as he would have it, 'brother' Omer Talon published a commentary on Cicero's *Academica* and, in his own treatise *Academia*, praised the Academics as having taken the liberty to abstain from judgement:

It is the proper and germane liberty of the Academics, i.e. of true men (for I consider the one to signify the same as the other), that of necessity in philosophy they submit to the laws and regulations of no man. It is also their modesty, for they introduce no proper judgement concerning uncertain things; their prudence as well, for by not asserting their own authority they compare the causes of things and bring out what might be said against any opinion; also their wisdom, for they devote themselves to the unique truth in all of life, as though it were a goddess, and value this more than the testimony of all philosophers.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 99.

<sup>73</sup> Skinner Q., *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: 1996) 9, 16.

<sup>74</sup> 'Haec est Academicorum, id est verorum hominum (vtrumque enim tantundem valere existimo) propria et germana libertas, nullius hominis legibus et institutis in philosophia necessario parere; modestia, in rebus incertis iudicium suum nullum interponere;

The liberty Talon ascribes to the Academics is not the *libertas scholastica* discussed above that awarded specific rights of teaching and arguing to the members of the university, but a freedom that consists in the contrary, in remaining silent by suspending judgement instead of credulously embracing any school's teaching. Academics, Talon says, are to Aristotelians what free men are to slaves.<sup>75</sup> The discursive models that would correspond to this stance were to be found in the books of Plato and Cicero. Talon thus puts Cicero's method of arguing *in utramque partem* together with Platonic dialogue as viable alternatives to scholastic dialectics. Ironically, at the very same time, Ramists such as the protestant theologian and rector of the Athenaeum in Stade in Lower Saxony, Severin Schlüter, discussed Ramus's logical teachings in his *Anatomia logicae Rameae* precisely along the lines of scholastic exposition. He expounded the basic tenets, confronted them with opposing views, and concluded with his own response.<sup>76</sup>

This example not only sheds light on the tensions and discrepancies that could occur *within* a certain school or movement. It also demonstrates once more how the principle of arguing contraries that is historically at the root of both scholastic dialectics and Academic doubt was not at all perceived as linking the respective practices. What I have construed as a unifying structural principle was not perceived as such at the various historical stages. Rather, as in this case, the institutional power of scholasticism underlined its dogmatic rigidity rather than its methodological flexibility. Against this background, *in utramque partem* discourse, as found in Cicero's writings, could be contrasted with scholastic method as a radically different methodological approach, even though both had claimed to follow Aristotle's example.

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prudentia, causas rerum conferre, et quid in quamque sententiam dici possit, exprimere, nulla adhibita sua autoritate; sapientia, unicam veritatem in omni vita tanquam deam colere eamque pluris quam omnium Philosophorum testimonia aestimare'. Talon Omer, *Academia* (Paris, Matthieu David: 1550) 20. The English translation is Charles Schmitt's, see Schmitt C.B., *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the Academia in the Renaissance* (The Hague: 1972) 78–108, here 84.

<sup>75</sup> Talon, *Academia* 13.

<sup>76</sup> *Anatomia logica Rameae, qua ipsa praecepta primum perspicue dissectantur, et explicantur: Deinde singula membratim in utramque partem perpetuis obiectionibus et responsionibus, partim a Peripateticis motis: partim ab auctore recens excogitatis solidissime disputantur et examinantur* (Frankfurt a.M., Palthenius: 1611). Schlüter's approach clearly echoes the procedure of the medieval *quaestiones disputatae* which were organized in five parts, from an opening question followed by arguments from the opposing party, the author's own arguments, the author's solution, and eventually the refutation of the opposing party's arguments. See Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy* 28–31.

Pierre Gassendi, who had to teach Aristotelian philosophy during a six year tenure at the faculty of theology at the University of Aix-en-Provence, launched an anti-Aristotelian attack in 1624 after he had quit the post, 'marshal[ing] all the routines of the Pyrrhonian tradition into one vast denunciation', as Richard Popkin has put it.<sup>77</sup> In the light of what I have discussed above, it is hardly surprising that Gassendi entitled his work *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos*. Remarkably, however, Gassendi claims that the book not only sprang from his experiences but that it actually represents what he had taught at Aix. A contradiction? It was actually the scholastic method itself that allowed for the accommodation of deviating positions. While Gassendi fought the dogmatism that held Aristotle's teachings as sacrosanct in each and every discipline, from physics to metaphysics, he could rely on the method that was equally based on Aristotelian precepts to present his case. He discussed the Aristotelian doctrine and the dissenting views *in utramque partem*. Which side was stronger was for others to judge, Gassendi says, but as for the publication, he rather cheekily remarks that he could limit himself to seeing the dissenting views into print, as the market already abounded with writings in the Aristotelian vein.<sup>78</sup>

It is in a review in Christoph August Heumann's *Acta philosophorum* of 1723 that Gassendi's manoeuvre is linked with the key notion of this volume: impartiality. The reviewer states that Gassendi was taking precautions against censure in that, while he did indeed deplore the habit of the scholastics to pass off their doctrine as *oracula*, he offered his criticism not as infallible truth, but as a search for truth 'without partiality'. This endeavour he subjected entirely to the judgement of the Roman-Catholic church.<sup>79</sup> While Gassendi does indeed stress his submission to the Church

<sup>77</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 78, 91–95.

<sup>78</sup> 'Quid ego praestiterim in utramque partem, aliorum esto iudicium. Unum in confesso est, non debuisse me quidpiam in publicum emittere ex iis, quae sunt a me pro Aristotele disputata: cum ecce Mundum iam compleant, quae ab Aristoteleis proferuntur volumina': Gassendi Pierre, *Dissertations en forme de paradoxes contre les Aristotéliens (Exercitationes Paradoxicae Adversus Aristoteleos)*, ed. and trans. B. Rochot (Paris: 1959) 9.

<sup>79</sup> '[S]o bedienenete er sich allhier dieser Vorsichtigkeit, daß er zwar bekennet, er könne die gemeine Art der Scholasticorum, da sie ihre Lehren vor untrügliche Oracula ausgeben, nicht billigen, sondern suche die Wahrheit ohne Partheylichkeit; jedoch seine Paradoxa nicht vor keine gewisse Wahrheiten ausgiebet, und diese gantze Schrifft dem Urtheil der Römisch=Catholischen Kirche demüthig unterwirffet.' Heumann Christoph August, *Acta philosophorum, das ist: Gründliche Nachrichten aus der Historia Philosophica, Nebst beygefügeten Urtheilen von denen dahin gehörigen alten und neuen Büchern, Dreizehendes Stück* (Halle, Rengerische Buchhandlung: 1723) 23–26, here 26.

in the strongest terms,<sup>80</sup> he does not refer to his project as being carried out 'without partiality'. Thus the review, published a hundred years after the book had come out, indicates a shift not only in terminology, but in the conception of scholarly practices. Gassendi does not present himself as impartial, but rather reports how he made use of a traditional technique to create a space for discussing his views in an intellectual environment that required him to adopt Aristotelian doctrine. He is partial in his critique of scholastic philosophy and openly says so.

One could argue that this is precisely where the prehistory of impartiality ends: where the old forms of contrarian argumentation are coupled with a notion of impartiality, where a concept is introduced that is alien to the old habit but nevertheless appears to fit perfectly. Still, in this process of reorganising scholarly practice, old certainties are turned upside down, and suddenly those who are delegating judgement to the reader are the advocates of truth, while the scholastics – are Pyrrhonists. Pierre de Villemandy, a reformed professor of philosophy at Saumur, indeed utters the hitherto unthinkable: it is the theologians who are the true Sceptics. 'Scepticism', he says, 'is the method of quite many doctors of the Roman church for treating theological questions; they weigh them on both sides, and suspend them without making a decision when there are equally strong arguments on both sides.'<sup>81</sup>

While Gassendi managed to present his dissenting theories within the framework of the university, academies and learned societies sought to set up alternative models for debate. One case in point were the *conférences*, organized by Théophraste Renaudot, who also, since 1630, headed the *bureau d'adresse* in Paris, an agency for the exchange of information of all kinds. The *conférences*, held between 1632 and 1643, brought together

<sup>80</sup> Gassendi, *Dissertations en forme de paradoxes* 11.

<sup>81</sup> 'In Theologiam, disciplinarum omnium ex se gravissimam, par fere irrepsit ex Recentiorum Scholasticorum, aliorumque multorum agendi methodo placitisque quibusdam, Scepticismus. Haec est nonnullorum Ecclesiae Romanae Doctorum in tractandis quaestionibus Theologicis methodus, ut eas in utramque partem librent, et paribus utrinque rationum momentis, nulla saepe interposita decisione, suspendant.' Villemandy Pierre de, *Scepticismus debellatus, seu humanae cognitionis ratio ab imis radicibus explicata* (Leiden, Cornelius Boutesteyn: 1697) 13. As examples Villemandy quotes works that are dedicated to listing the diverging positions of Thomists and Scotists, such as Rada Juan de, *Contraversiae Theologicae Inter S. Thomam et Scotum, Super Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, 4 vols. (Cologne, Crithius: 1619–1620); Lalemandet Johannes, *Cursus philosophicus* (Lyon, Laurent Anisson: 1656); Macedo Francisco, *Collationes doctrinae S. Thomae, et Scoti* (Passau, Pietro Maria Frambotti: 1671); and Arriaga Rodrigo de S.J., *Cursus philosophicus* (Paris, Jacques Quesnel: 1639).

a diverse group of interested citizens to discuss a highly diverse palette of topics. Yet again, the opposition of views was the method of choice, as Renaudot states in his *Avis au lecteur*, 'that there is no greater enemy to science than hampering the search for truth, which emerges principally in the opposition of contraries'.<sup>82</sup>

But contrary to scholastic disputation, participants are free to forward propositions of their own choice ('L'Assemblée trouva bon de commettre à la volonté d'un chacun le choix des propositions qu'on y devoit traiter'). Allegedly to displace the scholastic disputes that supposedly ended in riots and pedantic insults ('finissans mesmes d'ordinaires riotes & injures pedantesques'), each participant was then persuaded to have no interest in what he had initially proposed ('qu'il n'estoit nullement interessé à soustenir ce qu'il avoit mis en avant').<sup>83</sup> Thus, to put it bluntly, while scholastic disputation had required its participants to defend a position that was not their own with zeal, the *conférences* prompted their contributors to put forward what was on their mind regarding a given topic, but then to abstain from being partial to and defending their view and instead to resort to disinterestedness.

Renaudot's protocol for disinterested debate has hitherto been linked to notions of civility that have been described as being at the heart of the emergence of modern science.<sup>84</sup> But in the light of the history of taking sides and arguing contraries it points to a more fundamental shift in the modes of scholarly or, in a broader sense, learned debate. It indicates a trend towards personally identifying with theses propounded, but then in turn exhibiting a disinterestedness that was interpreted as a sign of modesty, civility, and openness for compromise. Renaudot's *Avis au lecteur* also addresses a second shift that is important with regard to the new virtue of impartiality: that judgement is suspended, but not in order to demonstrate an undecidability of issues as the Sceptics would have it, but in order to highlight the role of the audience or, in this instance, the reader, as a judge.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> '[Q]u'il n'y a rien plus ennemy de la science que d'empescher la recherche de la verité, qui paroist principalement en l'opposition des contraires': Renaudot Théophraste, *Recueil général des questions traitées és Conférences du Bureau d'Adresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres*, vol. 1 (Paris, Louis Chamhoudry: 1656) fol. [Aiiij]<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>83</sup> Renaudot, *Recueil général* fol. [Aiiij]<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Daston L., "Baconian Facts, Academic Civility, and the Prehistory of Objectivity", in Megill A. (ed.), *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham – London: 1994) 37–63, esp. 50–56.

<sup>85</sup> Renaudot, *Recueil général* fol. [Aiiij]<sup>r</sup>. Renaudot (*ibidem*) also makes a connection between participants bringing their own views to the fore, and abstaining from deciding



## 6. Conclusion

Arguing both sides of a question can and did serve sceptical purposes, but only rarely. From the beginning, it was on the one hand devised as an instrument for the inquiry if not into truth, then into probability. On the other, through its grounding not only in dialectics, but also in rhetoric, it was inevitably bound to support decision-making processes. That even Carneades' contrasting speeches eventually brought about a (favourable) decision by the Roman senate underscores this point.

A sceptical epistemology is an acquired or contrived mode of thinking that deliberately places itself outside the concerns of politics, justice, or everyday life. The suspension of judgement is after all a luxury that can only be sustained within the secure confines of a philosophical school. *Epoché* is, to speak with Pierre Bourdieu, firmly anchored in *scholé*.<sup>86</sup> In real life, the inability to reach decisions easily translates into a burden – this is what Michel de Montaigne famously described as his scar, his *cicatrice*, in his essay “On presumption” (“De la présomption”). In this essay, Montaigne, who has very aptly been termed a ‘reluctant skeptic’,<sup>87</sup> describes himself as being, as it were, judgementally impaired by his training in the art of arguing both sides: ‘I can defend an opinion all right, but I cannot select it’ (‘Je sçay bien soustenir une opinion, mais non pas la choisir’).<sup>88</sup>

But being able to argue on both sides does not equate to or even imply the virtue of impartiality. In the debates from antiquity up to the seven-

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issues in authoritative conclusions: those whose view would not figure in the conclusion might be jealous: ‘on a trouve plus d’inconvénients à faire vne conclusion sur chaque point, que de la laisser recueillir au Lecteur: le moindre desquels n’a pas esté la jalousie qu’un chacun concevroit aisément de voir l’opinion d’autrui préférée à la sienne’. For the role the mediality of print played in debates where impartiality was called upon, see Rainer Godel’s contribution in this volume.

<sup>86</sup> Bourdieu P., *Méditations pascaliennes*, 2nd ed. (Paris: 2003) 30: ‘La disposition “libre” et “pure” que favorise la *skholé* [le temps libéré des occupations et des préoccupations pratiques, dont l’école (encore la *skholé*) aménage une forme privilégiée, *ibid.* 28] implique l’ignorance (active ou passive) non seulement de ce qui se passe dans le monde de la pratique [...], et, plus précisément, dans l’ordre de la polis et de la politique, mais aussi de ce que c’est que d’exister, tout simplement, dans ce monde. Elle implique aussi et surtout l’ignorance, plus ou moins triomphante, de cette ignorance et des conditions économiques et sociales qui la rendent possible’.

<sup>87</sup> Schiffman Z.S., “Montaigne and the Rise of Skepticism in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, 4 (1984) 499–516, here 512.

<sup>88</sup> Montaigne Michel de, *Essais*, ed. A. Thibaudet, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 14 (Paris: 1950) II, 17, “De la praesumption”, 713–748, here 738. English translation: *The Complete Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech (London et al.: 1991) 743. On Montaigne and impartiality, see Richard Scholar’s contribution in this volume.



teenth century, there is not much concern with the audience, the person or group who has to make a decision based on the arguments laid out in front of them. Rather, there is an unfaltering belief in the strength of arguments, in the ability of rhetoric and dialectics to serve as an instrument for weighing them in order to make it clear which would be the path to follow. From the seventeenth century onwards, a new awareness of the conditions for assessing arguments and forming a judgement emerges. A third party's stance towards the pro and con arguments is foregrounded, and impartiality is affirmed as a virtue both in a debater and in the audience as a judge, thus short-circuiting the practices of law and scholarship.

The history of taking sides, and especially its end, is not a straightforward affair. As we have seen, under the umbrella of contrarian argumentation, partly openly antagonistic schools forge their programmes – the Peripatetics just as the Academics, the Sceptics just as the Sophists; it unites scholasticism and humanism, and it links the universities with the academies. These commonalities notwithstanding, the respective methods, while all grounded in the same principle, become matters of controversy, with, say, Ciceronian *in utramque partem* being pitted against scholastic disputation, which understood itself as being fundamentally based on *in utramque partem* discourse. Of course, all the schools, movements, and institutions pursued their own agenda, and while the methodological core of their endeavours may have been the same, they employed it to very different ends. What exactly brings about the end of taking sides as the preferred mode of scholarly debate is a question that has only just begun to be investigated. Whether impartiality is the expression of a new epistemology or a redressing of ways of distancing the ego from the argument is still up for debate.

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## REASONS FOR HOLDING BACK IN TWO ESSAYS BY MONTAIGNE

Richard Scholar

In 1576, the year when the noun *impartialité* is recorded as having first entered the French language, Michel de Montaigne found a new way to record his commitment to the freedom of the mind from prejudice and bias. Like other members of the minor nobility, among whom it had become something of a fashion, he had a personal token struck.<sup>1</sup> This token was a stamped piece of round metal, having the general appearance of a coin or medal, bearing the family coat of arms on one side and an emblem accompanied by a motto on the other. The token that Montaigne had struck in 1576 has been preserved. He chose for his emblem a pair of scales performing a delicate balancing act and, for his motto, the Greek word ΕΠΕΧΩ (*epechō*),<sup>2</sup> by which he meant 'I hold back, I do not budge' ('je soutiens, je ne bouge'). 1576, it would seem, marks a beginning for impartiality. For is this not the year in which not only was the word itself coined in France, but a coin was worded, witnessing impartiality's entry into a new period of linguistic and semantic currency?

Perhaps. It is certainly the case that, once the connection between the coining of impartiality and Montaigne's striking of his token has been made, further connections seem irresistibly to follow. The most important of these would see impartiality directly linked by the token to the philosophical tradition of radical doubt. I said above that Montaigne meant 'I hold back, I do not budge' ('je soutiens, je ne bouge') by *epechō*, his choice of motto for the token, because he translated *epechō* exactly thus, not on the token, but in a text that he was working on in the year that he had the token struck. This is the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond", the longest chapter of the *Essais*, famous above all for its presentation to a middling vernacular readership of the ancient school of radical scepticism known as Pyrrhonism. That presentation draws on the accounts of Cicero

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<sup>1</sup> See Demonet M.-L., *À plaisir: sémiotique et scepticisme chez Montaigne* (Orléans: 2002) ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> As Demonet explains (*À plaisir* 39 n. 16), engravers had some difficulty reproducing Greek characters, hence the unusual one used for the final letter of the word on the token where one would expect Ω.

and Diogenes Laertius but above all on the late Greek compilation of Sextus Empiricus, the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, which Montaigne is thought to have discovered in Henri Estienne's Latin translation in the mid-1570s. Montaigne, paraphrasing Sextus in the "Apologie", reports how the Pyrrhonians practise suspension of judgement on all matters of opinion. He lists the phrases they systematically use to express their doubt, and it is here that he recalls and translates their keyword *epechō*.<sup>3</sup> A little later (VS 527, F 477), he considers the linguistic problems raised by the art of perpetual doubt and offers a motto of his own concoction, 'Que sçay-je?' ('What do I know?'), as the first element of a new Pyrrhonist language, since its form as a question allows one to avoid asserting even that one knows one is in doubt. The plot thickens still further in the same sentence, where Montaigne pairs his new motto with the emblem of a level pair of scales found on his token, thereby linking that emblem directly to the perpetually balanced judgement of the Pyrrhonians.

These various signs inside the text of the "Apologie", as well as in the object world surrounding its composition,<sup>4</sup> suggest an uncharacteristic degree of personal commitment to Pyrrhonism in someone so eclectic and independent in his thinking as Montaigne. It would also appear to connect his revival of Pyrrhonism to the newly current language of impartiality. Impartiality seems to have crystallized not only as a set of interrelated linguistic expressions and material manifestations in 1576, then, but also to have gained a philosophical home.

Are these connections not starting to appear a little too neatly packaged for comfort? They do to me, for they risk appearing to cohere as a genesis of impartiality, when – simply put – the history of words and their meanings is rarely, if ever, that simple. We need here, perhaps, a different kind of genealogy. It may help to recall the distinction that Michel Foucault offers, in his article on the Nietzsche of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), between two senses of 'genealogy': the first sees it as a search through the past for the origins (*Ursprung*) of the present and offers a linear narrative of genesis; the second, by contrast, makes it a study of what Fou-

<sup>3</sup> All references to Montaigne's work are to the *Essais* in the French edition of Pierre Villey and V.-L. Saulnier (Paris: 1992) and in the English translation by Donald M. Frame of *The Complete Works* (London: 2003). Here, book II, chapter 12, Villey-Saulnier (hereafter VS) 505, Frame (hereafter F) 454.

<sup>4</sup> Montaigne also had *epechō* (completed by an upper-case Ω) inscribed on one of the rafters in his study. On the saying, its sceptical source, and its typographical form, see Legros A., *Essais sur poutres: peintures et inscriptions chez Montaigne* (Paris: 2000) 158–164, 212–214, 412–415.

cault calls *émergence* (*Entstehung*) and gives proper place to the role of chance, discontinuity, and conflict in all beginnings.<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche, Foucault shows approvingly, dismisses the first form of genealogy as ‘metaphysical’ in order to promote the second form as ‘true history’.<sup>6</sup>

There are good reasons for thinking that the truer history of impartiality will indeed be the study of its emergence. Other contributions to this volume trace signs of this emergence in various times, places, and situations. The set of connections that I sketched earlier between the coining of *impartialité* and the work of Montaigne, meanwhile, offers in itself an opportunity to observe the forces of chance, discontinuity, and conflict. For a start, it can hardly be maintained that impartiality was ever ‘coined’, if by that is meant the decisive creation of a neologism that quickly gains currency. While we know, thanks to the philologist Walther von Wartburg,<sup>7</sup> that the earliest recorded occurrence of the noun dates from 1576, when Matthias Sasbout included it in his French-Flemish dictionary, we also know early modern dictionaries to be in general notoriously slow to reflect changes of usage. *Impartialité* may have been in circulation long before the year in which, as it happened, Montaigne also had his token struck and wrote major parts of his “Apologie de Raimond Sebond”. There may be more than an element of chance to the coincidence of dates. Then, after 1576, impartiality seems to have been slow in gaining lexical prominence. The core senses of the term are now firmly embedded: the *OED* – in definitions to which we shall return – lists, for ‘impartial’, ‘not partial; not favouring one party or side more than another; unprejudiced, unbiased, fair, just, equitable’, and, for ‘impartiality’, offers ‘the quality or character of being impartial; freedom from prejudice or bias; fairness’. But we cannot assume that degree of sedimentation among late sixteenth-century speakers of English or French. While Randle Cotgrave’s 1611 French-English dictionary offers ‘impartialitie’ as one possible rendering of the French *justice* – this is the earliest citation in the *OED* for ‘impartiality’ in English – it gives the French noun *impartialité* no entry. In the *Essais*, which run to well over a thousand pages in modern editions, Montaigne himself nowhere uses the terms *impartialité* and *impartial* or, for that matter, their antonyms *partialité* and *partial* (which do appear in

<sup>5</sup> Foucault M., “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” (1971), in idem, *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988*, 4 vols. (Paris: 1994) II, 136–157, here 136–146.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” 146–150.

<sup>7</sup> Wartburg W. von, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch: Eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes*, vol. 7 (Basel: 1955), s.v. “partialis”, 674–675.

Cotgrave). None of this means that the terms *impartialité* and *impartial* had no currency in late sixteenth-century French. It does mean, though, that discontinuity is to be observed as well as chance among the connections I sketched earlier between Montaigne and the emerging language of impartiality.

Let us not rush into dissolving these connections in their entirety. Although Montaigne never calls upon *impartial* or *impartialité*, he frequently uses their radical, *parti*, in the *Essais*, and some of those uses correspond directly to the core meanings that impartiality comes to assume and to the conflicts – the third of the forces that Nietzsche and Foucault claim to be at work in any emergence – that impartiality both results from and intervenes in. Uses of *parti* in this area, drawn from two related chapters of the *Essais*, will be the focus of this essay. They form a cluster of signs suggesting that a complex emergence of impartiality is visible in the *Essais*.

That emergence is to be understood here not as a story of genesis in which Montaigne plays the role of the father, but as a threshold from which it becomes possible to observe and analyse his uses of *parti* in the semantic field of impartiality. I use the term ‘threshold’ in the sense made available by Terence Cave’s work on ‘pre-histories’ to mean a perspectival and time-bound construction, fully visible only in retrospect, which functions as a heuristic device for historical and critical understanding.<sup>8</sup> What this threshold reveals is that if Montaigne articulates a language and meaning for impartiality, he does so within the broader context of what I have elsewhere called his art of free-thinking.<sup>9</sup>

Free-thinking, as Montaigne practises it, may be defined as an ideal of non-aligned, experimental, and impartial engagement in the unending search of the *Essais* for that elusive thing called truth. That ideal, which Montaigne progressively refines even as he explores his commitment to it, invariably exists for him in a state of tense interaction with its own limits. The standard English translation of the Latin tag *libertas philosophandi*, free-thinking is expressed in formulations such as a proverbial phrase that starts life in the work of Aristotle and is widely used across

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<sup>8</sup> On this, see Cave T., *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Geneva: 1999), *Pré-histoires II: langues étrangères et troubles économiques au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: 2001), and Holland A. – Scholar R. (eds.), *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method* (London: 2009).

<sup>9</sup> See Scholar R., *Montaigne and the Art of Free-Thinking* (Oxford: 2010), which explores in greater detail than has here been possible the two essays that form the subject of the present chapter.



Renaissance Europe in its Latin version, *Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas* ('Plato is my friend but a greater friend is truth'). Aristotle was a pupil of Plato, of course, so, in uttering that pithy phrase, he was claiming, above all, the freedom to think against the grain of authority (in the form of his former philosophy teacher). But teachers and schools of philosophy do not provide the only obstacle to the unimpeded movement of thought. Other obstacles may take the form of other external constraints: the laws and customs of the society in question, for example, and the ways in which that society exercises control over the dissemination of thought. They may equally take the form of inner constraints: the insidious pull of our passions and our self-interest, for example, and the prejudice or bias resulting from over-zealous allegiance to a cause. It is that last obstacle to free-thinking that Montaigne reflects upon and resists when using the language of *parti* in "De la liberté de conscience" (II.19: "Of Freedom of Conscience") and "De mesnager sa volonté" (III.10: "Of Husbanding your Will") and it is the matter and manner of his resistance in those two chapters that I offer as his most visible contribution to the emergence of impartiality. The art of free-thinking, for Montaigne, may thus be defined as, among other things, the attempt he makes to write himself – and his reader – into a position of what the *OED*, in its definition of 'impartiality', calls 'freedom from prejudice or bias'.

Montaigne's impartiality does not, however, entirely fit the core senses given by the *OED*. It drives a wedge between two of them, in fact, for while Montaigne attempts to bring the freedom from prejudice or bias just mentioned to the judgements he makes, he does not assume that this requires 'not favouring one party or side more than another', as in the *OED* definition of 'impartial'. In an age as rotten as the civil-war-torn age in which he lived, Montaigne certainly favoured one party more than another, but he nonetheless – despite his political allegiances – sought to preserve his thought from the vitiations of prejudice or bias. Does this mean that Montaigne's impartiality was partial? That depends, of course, on your definition of impartiality. My view is that, while the *OED* defines the noun well as 'freedom from prejudice or bias', its definition of the adjective risks confusing impartiality with neutrality.<sup>10</sup> Yet those two notions are not identical, as the case of Montaigne shows.

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<sup>10</sup> The *OED* defines 'neutrality' (3b) thus: 'the state or condition of not being on any side; absence of decided views, feeling, or expression; indifference; impartiality, dispassionateness'.

Whether Montaigne's capacity to side with one political party or side over another limits his impartiality or conversely defines it by distinguishing it from neutrality, that same capacity certainly indicates a limit to his Pyrrhonism, which involves the suspending of judgements rather than the making of them. While Montaigne chose enthusiastically to think with the Pyrrhonians, as has already been seen, he was, despite what Pascal said about him, no pure Pyrrhonian.<sup>11</sup> The *Essais* reveal no single allegiance of this kind but an eclectic set of competing allegiances towards conflicting philosophical traditions. They thereby record, above all, an attempt to develop – in the midst of one's various allegiances – a way of thinking and writing that is untethered by those allegiances: which is, in the precise sense that Montaigne lends to the word, impartial.

### *Partial Histories: The Case of Julian*

The first of the two chapters in which Montaigne uses the language of *parti* to reflect on and resist the prejudice that results from over-zealous allegiance to a cause, "De la liberté de conscience" (II.19), concerns the freedom to adhere to a faith other than the established or dominant one. Montaigne opens the chapter with a sentence of general reflection on the distortions that thoughts and deeds of otherwise well-meaning people suffer when they fall prey to the immoderation, the passionate intensity, of religious zeal: 'Il est ordinaire de voir les bonnes intentions, si elles sont conduites sans moderation, pousser les hommes à des effects très-vitieux' (VS 668, F 615: 'It is usual to see good intentions, if they are carried out without moderation, push men to very vicious acts'). Such people prove incapable of holding back, of conducting themselves with that degree of self-restraint, 'pushed' as they are into action by a judgement that has been distorted by prejudice or bias.

Montaigne goes on, in the sentences that follow, to specify the two main points of temporal reference for the chapter. The first is present-day civil-war-torn France. This should come as no surprise: the long-running and, at the time of writing, ongoing conflict between Catholics and Protestants (or Huguenots) is at the heart of the politics of the age in which he lived. The infusion of Huguenotism in France was particu-

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<sup>11</sup> Pascal Blaise, *Entretien avec M. de Sacy*, in *Les Provinciales, Pensées, et opuscules divers*, ed. G. Ferreyrolles – P. Sellier (Paris: 2004) 722.

larly strong in the towns of the South, including Bordeaux, where Montaigne held the office of magistrate in the *Parlement* from 1557 to 1570 and where he would, in the years following the first publication of “De la liberté de conscience”, serve as Mayor. In that chapter’s second sentence he declares his allegiance to the established Catholic religion and monarchic government of the country. This, he says in a stroke against the Protestant cause,<sup>12</sup> is assuredly ‘le meilleur et le plus sain party’ (VS 668, F 615: ‘the best and soundest side’). It is striking that Montaigne here states the side he favours rather than attempting to hide his allegiance: it is as if he sensed that he could better limit both the possibility and the appearance of partiality that might result from his allegiances by admitting them in the first place.

The rest of the chapter portrays its author as a man of pragmatic and moderate politics, keen to shore up the established order against the prospect of something worse, and attempting to steer a middle course through the Civil Wars. This posture associates Montaigne with the *Politiques*, a loose confederacy of moderate Catholics and Protestants united by no identifiable political agenda other than their desire to preserve the state against the partisan conflicts of the opposing sides, and Montaigne goes on in the later part of the chapter to express cautious support for the most recent attempt by France’s leaders, in the 1576 Edict of Beaulieu, to repair the damage done to national unity by the massacres of Huguenots in 1572, by condemning the massacres and recognizing freedom of conscience and also of cult (outside Paris) for Huguenots. This policy strengthened, for a short while, the position of the *Politiques*. But it provoked bitter resentment among hardline Catholics who, under Henri de Guise, promptly formed a national League to combat the Huguenots. Montaigne criticizes the hardliners in this chapter. He does so, in part, by considering in parallel the period of early Christianity in the Roman Empire, particularly during the reign of the so-called ‘apostate’ emperor Julian, in which he criticizes many early Christians and their supporters for the same partisan immoderation of thought and deed. Julian provides the point of connection between these two times and places since, as we shall see, he emerges

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<sup>12</sup> On Montaigne’s attitude towards Protestants, see Lestringant F., “Montaigne et les protestants”, in *Montaigne politique: actes du colloque international tenu à University of Chicago (Paris) les 29 et 30 avril 2005*, ed. P. Desan (Paris: 2006) 353–372. Lestringant traces in Montaigne what he calls ‘la continuité d’une opposition, tant théologique que politique, à la Réforme et au parti huguenot’ (354).

as a test-case, in fourth-century Rome and sixteenth-century France alike, for impartial thinking.

The case of Julian is first introduced as an illustration of, and corrective to, the chapter's opening observation about the distortions that truth suffers at the hands of the partial. Having taxed some of his fellow Catholics with prejudice and bias, Montaigne widens his criticism to include Christians of the past, in particular those over-zealous early Christians who destroyed pagan books of all kinds. He lends the point a polemical edge: 'J'estime que ce desordre ait plus porté de nuysance aux lettres que tous les feux des barbares' (VS 668, F 615: 'I consider that this excess did more harm to letters than all the bonfires of the barbarians'). The zealots of 'our' religion, as Montaigne calls it, are responsible for having caused unjustifiable and irreparable material damage to learning and letters. Montaigne might have argued, as many Christian commentators did, that, in destroying the fabrications of the pagans in this way, these zealots were in fact protecting the truth divinely revealed to them. He chooses, instead, to argue that they were responsible for a serious distortion of historical truth in lending false praise to the Roman emperors who helped their cause while universally condemning those who were hostile to it. Distortion of the truth, whether through excessive praise or blame, belongs among those very vicious acts to which good intentions, under the sway of immoderate passion, ordinarily lead. Montaigne's provocative assertion here is that the many over-zealous Christians, rather than their pagan and barbarian contemporaries, were guilty of just such a distortion.

Julian is introduced at this point in the argument as an example of a Roman emperor excessively blamed by pro-Christian historians of the past and the present. The pagan Roman emperor who introduced freedom of conscience across his empire was a figure of considerable historical interest in sixteenth-century France. Other contributions to the debate about the policy of freedom of conscience cite Julian, either – in the case of the *Politiques* – as a ruler admirable for having tolerated religious difference in the interests of peace in his empire, or – in the case of Huguenot writers such as Théodore de Bèze and Innocent Gentillet – as an atheist and tyrant who introduced freedom of conscience as a Machiavellian policy designed to divide and rule.<sup>13</sup> There was a different Julian for each faction in the French Civil Wars, in short, each reflecting its attitude towards the policy of the French crown. In chapter four of his work on approaches to

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<sup>13</sup> See Nakam G., *Montaigne: la manière et la matière* (Paris: 2006) 121–123.

the writing of history, the *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), Jean Bodin, a humanist scholar allied with the *Politiques*, offers Julian as an example of a figure ill-served by those Christian historians who are blinded to the emperor's qualities by his faults.<sup>14</sup> Montaigne, who seems to have read Bodin's *Methodus* shortly before composing "De la liberté de conscience" (II.19), shares with him an interest in the challenges that Julian poses as an object of historiography. It is clear, then, that in choosing to think about recent developments in French politics by means of history, in particular the case of Julian, Montaigne is deliberately intervening in the contemporary debate.

From the outset, he places his portrait of Julian under the sign of a search for a truth about him that runs counter to the deepest convictions of Julian's opponents, asserting '[c]'estoit, à la verité, un très-grand homme et rare' (VS 669, F 616: 'He was, in truth, a very great and rare man'). Much of the portrait is given to a list of Julian's many qualities and the anecdotes that bear them out: his virtue, the fruit of a philosophical soul, shown in his chastity and sobriety; the impartiality of his justice and his lack of cruelty towards Christians despite his opposition to their faith; and his preeminence in letters as well as arms. As the list turns towards his military virtues, it appears to take on the shape of a life of Julian, ending with his death, which he met (like all the best military leaders) on the field of battle, in the flower of his age. Montaigne visibly leans against the excessive blame heaped on Julian by his Christian detractors.

There is more to Montaigne's portrait of Julian, however, than praise alone. Universal praise, as a response to the universal condemnation offered by Julian's opponents, would after all risk being *merely* contrarian – a revisionist exercise that was subject to an equal and opposite distortion – and truth, that greater friend, would have been ill-served. Julian certainly had vices, most notably in the realm of religion, where Montaigne's judgement is unequivocal: 'En matiere de religion, il estoit vicieux par tout' (VS 670, F 618: 'In the matter of religion he was bad throughout'). He supports this judgement with examples of the superstitious beliefs and the infatuation with divination that stayed with Julian until the moment – and reconciled him to the manner – of his death. There is a note of admiration to Montaigne's account of Julian's acceptance of death, but it is an admiration tinged with reserve, since it is clear that Montaigne considers that

<sup>14</sup> Bodin Jean, *La méthode de l'histoire*, trans. P. Mesnard (Paris: 1941) 65–66.

acceptance to have been the product of Julian's religious vices as much as of his philosophical virtues.

The impression given, then, is of a search on Montaigne's part for a truth about Julian that sits somewhere between immoderate praise and blame and that holds back from either extreme. Montaigne reveals in the interstices of his portrait something of how his search for that truth is conducted. When describing the emperor's dispensation of justice, he introduces the two main historians from which his portrait is drawn, Eutropius and Ammianus Marcellinus. Ammianus Marcellinus's thirty-one *Rerum gestarum libri*, published in the early 390s, were intended to serve as a continuation of the earlier history of Tacitus (56–?120 CE) by covering Roman history of the period 96–378 CE.<sup>15</sup> Only the last eighteen books, covering the years 353–378, survive. Ammianus draws on Eutropius and other historians as well as on his own experience in his account of Julian's life and reign (XV.8–XXV.4). His account, to which Montaigne is referring in the opening sentences of our chosen passage, is much longer than that of Eutropius, and even more favourable to Julian, although it also finds fault with him: Ammianus, though no more of a Christian than Julian, in particular criticizes the emperor's harsh treatment of them on more than one occasion (see, for example, XXII.9, 12 and XXII.10, 7).

While Ammianus's remarks about Christians attracted conflicting interpretations in the early modern period,<sup>16</sup> Montaigne was by no means alone in considering them to be the words of someone genuinely sympathetic to the plight of the Christians in Julian's empire, and he immediately spells out what he sees as Ammianus's pro-Christian perspective: the Roman historian was, Montaigne says, 'bien affectionné à nostre party' (VS 669, F 616: 'well affected to our side'). He uses his two historical sources to correct what he considers to be distortions about Julian propagated by his enemies: he dismisses the idea that Julian behaved with cruelty towards Christians, for example, by pointing out that no such episode appears in Ammianus, who, given his partiality, would have hardly neglected to mention it; he gives the same reason, later, for rejecting as apocryphal the idea that Julian, on receiving his death-wound, acknowledged that Christ had defeated him (VS 671, F 618). Montaigne turns among the various sources

<sup>15</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri*, ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA – London: 1935–1971).

<sup>16</sup> See Barnes T., *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY – London: 1998) 79–94, esp. 80.

at his disposal to those that he can most trust. But he never awards them an absolute trust.

He chooses, instead, to think with them, comparing them against one another and other sources, seeking to build up a picture that is consistent and probable. He appeals directly on two occasions to a particular notion of probable truth,<sup>17</sup> that which is 'vray-semblable' because founded on the authority of a witness, in order to moderate the stories told about Julian: it is probable, he says, that Ammianus would not have neglected to mention Julian's cruelty, had such cruelty been in evidence, and it is more probable that Julian merely feigned Christian belief until he became emperor than that he was guilty of true apostasy. In that last instance, Montaigne makes no appeal to his sources, presenting the probable thought as his own: 'Cette opinion me semble plus vraysemblable' (VS 670, F 618: 'This theory seems to me more likely'). The use of a first-person perspective adds here to the image of Montaigne thinking with history, searching for a truth about Julian that he knows can only ever be probable, but passionately committed to that search nonetheless.

There is a connection to be made between this approach to history in "De la liberté de conscience" and the sceptical traditions that Montaigne presents in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond". The connection reveals, above all, Montaigne's eclectic treatment of those traditions. Montaigne performs no Pyrrhonist suspension of judgement in "De la liberté de conscience", and his appeal to the notion of the probable is foreign to Pyrrhonist modes of radical doubt. It brings to mind the procedures of a rival sceptical tradition, that of the New Academy, whose followers gave provisional assent to ideas that seemed probable to them while remaining certain only that the truth of no doctrine was certain. Montaigne recounts in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" how Cicero, in old age, approached learning: 'C'estoit sans obligation d'aucun parti, suivant ce qui luy sembloit probable, tantost en l'une secte, tantost en l'autre: se tenant tousjours sous la dubitation de l'Academie' (VS 501, F 450: 'It was without obligation to any party, following what seemed to him probable now in one sect, now in another, keeping himself always in Academic doubt'). While Academic sceptics are certain of their doubt, the Pyrrhonians doubt even that they doubt, hence the need for the interrogative language that Montaigne invents for them in the form of the motto 'Que sçay-je?'. Montaigne, however, is not always concerned to point up the difference between these

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<sup>17</sup> See Maclean I., *Montaigne philosophe* (Paris: 1996) 23–29, here 27 n. 1.



distinct schools of sceptical thought. Indeed, he draws Cicero's account of Academic scepticism into his own presentation of Pyrrhonism by quoting in support of the latter Cicero's celebration of the Academic sceptics, 'hoc liberiores et solutiores quod integra illis est iudicandi potestas' ('the more free and independent because their power to judge is intact').<sup>18</sup> Even what seems to be the purest expression of Montaigne's Pyrrhonism proves, on closer inspection, to be an instance of his eclecticism.<sup>19</sup> One of the most powerful things to emerge from Montaigne's eclectic mixture of traditions is the figure of the free-thinker, concerned neither to rush to judgement nor to suspend it, but to keep his power to judge intact by holding back and approaching questions with impartiality. "De la liberté de conscience" uses the case of Julian to offer an example of this kind of impartial free-thinking in action.

### *Portrait of the Author as an Impartialist*

The second of the two chapters in which Montaigne uses the language of *parti* to reflect on and resist the prejudice that results from over-zealous allegiance to a cause, "De mesnager sa volonté" (III.10), is one of his most sustained reflections on the ethical and political dimensions of his abiding thirst to keep his freedom of thought intact. The chapter takes its place alongside others of Book III in which Montaigne reflects on contemporary events, particularly the civil wars in France, and on the role he played in them. The two terms that he served as Mayor of Bordeaux in the years 1581–1585, between the first publication of "De liberté de conscience" (in 1580) and that of "De mesnager sa volonté" (in 1588), fall under his particular scrutiny in the latter chapter. The entire chapter turns around the question of how much individual will you should properly invest in the service of the collective good. It offers, in response to the question, the thought that whatever else you do, you should certainly keep alive the freedom of thought that made you fit for service in the first place.

The middle part of the chapter sketches out the approach required of anyone wishing to preserve that freedom in the heat of political engagement. Taking this approach means cultivating your ability to recognize

<sup>18</sup> Cicero, *Academic Philosophy* II, 3, quoted by Montaigne, II, 12, VS 504, F 453.

<sup>19</sup> See Force P., "Montaigne and the Coherence of Eclecticism", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2009) 523–544.



truth, wherever it is found, and so to discriminate between appearance and reality, between public causes and private interests, and between things as they are and things as you would wish them to be. As Montaigne sketches what this approach entails and advocates it to his readers, he also examines why so few of his contemporaries adopt it, so that this part of the chapter, as much as it is a description of its constituent features and virtues, is an analysis of the forces – such as our interests and allegiances, prejudices and biases – that prevent or vitiate freedom of thought.

What is striking about the middle part of the chapter is that it delivers its advocacy of free-thinking in a portrait of the author as an impartialist. Montaigne starts by asserting the independence of his thought from his allegiances to one side or another. The example he offers is embedded in the context of the civil wars:

Quand ma volonté me donne à un party, ce n'est pas d'une si violente obligation que mon entendement s'en infecte. Aus presens brouillis de cet estat, mon interest ne m'a faict mesconnoistre ny les qualitez louables en nos adversaires, ny celles qui sont reprochables en ceux que j'ay suivy.<sup>20</sup>

The civil wars remain in the foreground throughout this part of the chapter. So does the author:

Je me prens fermement au plus sain des partis, mais je n'affecte pas qu'on me remarque spécialement ennemy des autres, et outre la raison generale. J'accuse merueilleusement cette vitieuse forme d'opiner: Il est de la Ligue, car il admire la grace de Monsieur de Guise. L'activeté du Roy de Navarre l'estonne: il est Huguenot. Il treuve cecy à dire aux mœurs du Roy: il est seditieux en son cœur. Et ne conceday pas au magistrat mesme qu'il eust raison de condamner un livre pour avoir logé entre les meilleurs poètes de ce siècle un heretique. N'oserions nous dire d'un voleur qu'il a belle greve? Et faut-il, si elle est putain, qu'elle soit aussi punaise? Aux siecles plus sages, revoqua-on le superbe tiltre de Capitolinus, qu'on avait auparavant donné à Marcus Manlius comme conservateur de la religion et liberté publique? Estouffa-on la memoire de sa liberalité et de ses faicts d'armes et recompenses militaires ottroyées à sa vertu, par ce qu'il affecta depuis la Royauté, au prejudice des loix de son pays? S'ils ont pris en haine un avocat, l'endemain il leur devient ineloquent. J'ay touché ailleurs le zele qui poussa des gens de bien à semblables fautes. Pour moy, je sçay bien dire: il fait meschamment cela, et vertueusement cecy. De mesmes, aux prognostiques ou evenements

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<sup>20</sup> 'When my will gives me over to one party, it is not with so violent an obligation that my understanding is infected by it. In the present broils of this state, my own interest has not made me blind to either the laudable qualities in our adversaries or those that are reproachable in the men I have followed' (VS 1012, F 941).

sinistres des affaires, ils veulent que chacun, en son party, soit aveugle et hebeté; que notre persuasion et jugement serve non à la verité mais au project de notre désir. Je faudroy plustost vers l'autre extreme, tant je crains que mon desir me suborne. Joint que je me deffie un peu tendrement des choses que je souhaite.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage, which Montaigne added to the text of “De mesnager sa volonté” during the four years that followed the chapter’s first publication in 1588, he extends his self-portrait as a free-thinking impartialist. He represents himself as someone who, in spite of – or perhaps even, as I suggested earlier, *thanks to* – his reaffirmed commitment to the ‘healthiest’ of the parties in the civil wars, is not only able to protect his judgements from the partialities of zeal, but also willing to denounce their baleful influence on his contemporaries, and in particular on the two extremist groups of contemporary French politics, the Huguenots and the members of the hardline Catholic League. He pinpoints those same two groups as offering examples of what he calls ‘this bad form of arguing’. He offers wider examples, in a satirical vein, to show how passion-fuelled partisan thinking produces injustices as well as bad arguments: the case of the woman thought to smell horrid just because she is a whore, of the lawyer said to be halting of speech just because he is hated, and so on. He then reveals the process whereby he moderates his desires, even leans against them, for fear of enslaving his judgement to them. This passage exemplifies “De

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<sup>21</sup> ‘I adhere firmly to the healthiest of the parties, but I do not seek to be noted as especially hostile to the others and beyond the bounds of the general reason. I condemn extraordinarily this bad form of arguing: “He is of the League, for he admires the grace of Monsieur de Guise.” “The activity of the king of Navarre amazes him: he is a Huguenot.” “He finds this to criticize in the king’s morals: he is seditious in his heart.” And I did not concede even to the magistrate that he was right to condemn a book for having placed a heretic among the best poets of this century. Should we not dare say of a thief that he has a fine leg? And if she is a whore, must she also necessarily have bad breath? In wiser ages, did they revoke the proud title of Capitolinus, which they had previously given to Marcus Manlius as the preserver of public religion and liberty? Did they smother the memory of his liberality and his feats of arms and the military rewards accorded to his valour, because he afterwards aspired to kingship, to the prejudice of his country’s laws? If they have formed a hatred for an advocate, the next day in their view he becomes ineloquent. I have elsewhere touched on the zeal that impels good men into similar faults. For my part, I can perfectly well say: “He does this wickedly and that virtuously.” Likewise in predictions or in the unfavourable outcome of affairs, they want everyone to be blind and stupid in his own cause, and our conviction and judgement to serve, not the truth, but the aim of our desire. I should rather err toward the other extreme, so much do I fear being suborned by my desire. Besides, I am somewhat tenderly distrustful of the things I wish for’ (VS 1013, F 942–943).

mesnager sa volonté" above all, perhaps, in that, even as Montaigne offers a master-class in the art of impartial free-thinking, the civil war context in which his master-class is visibly embedded shows how formidable the obstacles are to the cultivation of that art. Yet, the more formidable those obstacles appear, the more uncompromising he becomes in his advocacy, urging his readers to share his view that impartiality is vital to a good life and to a healthy body politic.

Montaigne starts and ends the passage in a present tense whose aspect is 'iterative' in the sense that it describes his customary ways of being and doing: his ever-moderate support of good causes, his vigilant distrust of the things he desires, and so on. The present tenses in which he states his commitment to these values are counterbalanced, however, by the ability of his prose to travel through time. His time-travel in this passage takes him as far back as ancient Rome, which here embodies the wisdom of the free-thinking past, as so often for Montaigne. He refers in particular to the rise and fall, in around 390 BCE, of the legendary hero Marcus Manlius.<sup>22</sup> Alerted to the arrival in the city of the marauding Gauls by the cackling geese on Rome's Capitol Hill, the story goes, Marcus Manlius earned his nickname 'Capitolinus' by promptly putting the enemy to flight. He fought that day to protect the freedom of the Roman Republic, as Montaigne puts it, but he later sought to steal the same freedom by bidding to seize tyrannical power. What makes the ancient Romans wise, in Montaigne's view, is that they – unlike most of his contemporaries – were able to judge actions each according to its merits and to praise Marcus Manlius's heroism even as they punished his treachery. When Montaigne declares himself to be capable of making judgements in the same unfettered way, a few sentences after he finishes telling the story of Marcus Manlius, he implicitly presents himself as having a mind cast after the pattern of wiser ages than his own. He brings, in the time-travelling vehicle of his text, a remote past towards the present.

Between the remote past and Montaigne's present, in this passage, lies the altogether nearer past of his early compositions and their reception. The author, discreetly but unmistakably, supports his self-portrait by looking back in this passage to two occasions on which he demonstrated impartiality and independence of mind. The first is the sentence in which he claims to have made no concession even to the magistrate who

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<sup>22</sup> Montaigne's sources for his story are Livy's *History of Rome* V, 47 and VI, 11, and Cicero, *De republica* II, 27,49.

condemned a book for praising a poet who was also a heretic. He refers here to none other than the *Essais* of 1580 and to the criticism they received from Vatican censors during his visit to Rome in 1581.<sup>23</sup> The second occasion is the sentence in which Montaigne claims to have ‘elsewhere touched on the zeal that impels good men into similar faults’. Here as nowhere else in Book III, he refers the reader back to the chapter just discussed, “De la liberté de conscience”. He has good reason now to be recalling that chapter’s analysis of the zeal that produces partial judgements on both sides of a confessional divide, for zeal is also the culprit in “De mesnager sa volonté”, the reason why we moderns – as opposed to the wiser ancients – cannot appreciate the beauties of a poet who is also a heretic nor the eloquence of a lawyer who happens to be on the opposing side of the argument. But Montaigne extends that analysis in “De mesnager sa volonté” by introducing a personal tone that went unsounded in “De la liberté de conscience”. He presents himself, no less, as free from zeal, the vice of this age of partiality, and therefore able to judge particular actions on their merits: ‘Pour moy, je sçay bien dire: il fait meschamment cela, et vertueusement cecy’ (‘For my part, I can perfectly well say: “He does this wickedly and that virtuously”’). The repetition of first-person pronouns at the beginning of the sentence, combined with the absence throughout of qualifying or moderating expressions, sounds here an altogether more emphatic statement of the turn of mind that Montaigne brings to the art of making judgements. He is now offering, in his own name, an absolute advocacy of impartiality and independence of mind.

Montaigne’s capacity to travel through time may be said, thanks to his literary style, to extend into the future. He did not claim to be able to read what the future held, and he distrusted those of his contemporaries who did, as he makes clear in the early chapter “Des prognostications” (I.11). Yet he looks to the future at certain moments in the *Essais*, thinks and writes about it in distinctive ways, and even, it might be said, makes a place for the future in the text. Quietly but firmly, Montaigne makes room in “De mesnager sa volonté” for a reader wishing to be a companion to him in the adventure of the text, a reader whom he calls upon to agree or disagree with him in their shared endeavour to make a friend of truth.

How does he approach his task? The answer is to be found in the passage’s subtle interplay of personal pronouns. Montaigne, the speaker (*je*), tries out his thoughts in the company of three groups, which he refers to

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<sup>23</sup> See my *Montaigne and the Art of Free-Thinking* 166–178.

respectively as *on* ('one'), *ils* ('they'), and *nous* ('we'). Frame introduces potential confusion here in translating by 'they' not only the third-person plural *ils* but also the indefinite personal pronoun *on*. Montaigne, by contrast, reserves the third-person plural for those incapable of free-thinking who reveal their partial desires by wanting us to imitate them: 'Ils veulent que chacun, en son party, soit aveugle et hebeté; que notre persuasion et jugement serve non à la verité mais au project de notre désir' ('They want everyone to be blind and stupid in his own cause [*party*], and our conviction and judgement to serve, not the truth, but the aim of our desire'). He mainly applies *on* to those wise and historically remote ancient Romans who showed their difference from those third-person plural partialists just described by serving the truth as faithful friends even when it went against their erstwhile preferences and allegiances to do so (as in the case of Marcus Manlius).

*Nous*, as Montaigne uses it here, is the most flexible and capacious of the three groups. In the sentence preceding the text quoted, his use of the pronoun is timebound, referring as it does to those of his contemporaries with whom he sides in the present troubles. It next appears in the sentence following the one in which Montaigne alludes to his brush with the Roman censors: 'N'oserions nous dire d'un voleur qu'il a belle greve?' ('Should we not dare say of a thief that he has a fine leg?'). *Nous* here floats free of a particular time and place. It implicates not only the author, but also the reader, whom Montaigne, through his inclusive choice of pronoun, challenges to join the circle of those impartial enough to praise the physical grace of a villain. The only alternative home for the reader in this passage is, of course, the partialists, lurking under the banner of *ils*, whom Montaigne charges with trying to foist 'their' devices and desires upon 'us'. On this, its final occurrence in the passage, the first-person plural is part of a declaration at once timebound and for times to come, a message sent to the future. It quietly challenges us readers to judge where we belong in the drama of personal pronouns that the passage stages, whether we are one of 'them' or one of 'us', those free-thinking impartialists among whom Montaigne numbers himself.

Montaigne's self-portrait as an impartialist in "De mesnager sa volonté", composed some decade and a half after he had his token struck, still bears the semantic traces of the Greek word *epechō* that he chose for his personal motto back in 1576. But the context for that motto has shifted. In 1576, it will be remembered, Montaigne chose in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" to translate *epechō* as 'je soutiens, je ne bouge' ('I hold back, I do not budge') and to associate it with the radical doubt of the

Pyrrhonist school. Marie-Luce Demonet, in her study of Montaigne's token and its wider resonances in his work,<sup>24</sup> has pointed out that other uses of the verb *soutenir* in the *Essais* carry two possible meanings – of remaining steadfast in a military situation and of restraining and bridling one's desires – and that Montaigne applies the verb to himself in the second of those senses at the beginning of “De mesnager sa volonté”:

Je m'engage difficilement. Autant que je puis, je m'employe tout à moy; et en ce subject mesme, je briderois pourtant et soutiendrois volontiers mon affection qu'elle n'y plonge trop entiere, puis que c'est un subject que je possede à la mercy d'autrui, et sur lequel la fortune a plus de droict que je n'ay.<sup>25</sup>

Coupled with *brider* ('bridling'), *soutenir* here refers to a particularly active exercise of restraint, the attempt not to suspend one's engagements and desires – or to neutralize them – but to hold them in check sufficiently to prevent them from taking over and imposing their priorities. Montaigne refers to the same complex process, in the last sentence of the passage quoted at length earlier from the same chapter, when he says: ‘Je me deffie un peu tendrement des choses que je souhaite’ (‘I am somewhat tenderly distrustful of the things I wish for’). A tender distrust of every cherished wish, an acknowledgement of inconvenient truths, and a holding back from the party that one judges to be the healthiest: Montaigne, in using and reusing his motto, bears witness to both the value and the vexations of remaining impartial.

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<sup>24</sup> See Demonet, *À plaisir* 62–63.

<sup>25</sup> ‘I do not engage myself easily. As much as I can, I employ myself entirely upon myself; and even in that subject I would still fain bridle my affection and keep it from plunging in too entirely, since this is a subject I possess at the mercy of others, and over which fortune has more right than I have’ (VS 1003, F 932).

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## 2. NEWS AND IMPARTIALITY



## PARTEYLICHKEIT AND THE PERIODICAL PRESS

Jörg Jochen Berns  
trans. Pamela E. Selwyn

### I. *Reconstructing a Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Discussion on Media Politics*<sup>1</sup>

It would be hard to find a word as anathema to bourgeois thinking as partiality. Where the diagnosis might be partiality, the principle of scholarly or sensory knowledge – whether claimed under the banner of truth, liberty, or imagination – is always suspended. Matters are worse still when partiality is positively connoted as an epistemological principle, as is common among Marxists, or when the mere possibility of impartial knowledge and action is contested.

If, just as the principle of partiality is a genuinely socialist one, that of impartiality is a genuinely bourgeois one, then here, too, it is true that within the dialectic of bourgeois thought, all of the bourgeoisie's ideas reveal their revolutionary explosive power the moment someone seriously attempts to realize them. We can demonstrate this dialectic by taking as an example the discussion, conducted in the very heart of German territorial absolutism, of the opportunities and aporias of disseminating information impartially via the newest and most vibrant medium of the era, the newspaper.

While the phenomenon of partiality is as old as the history of class struggle, socialist theorists were the first to recognize that this phenomenon conformed to certain laws, thereby rendering partiality manageable as an epistemological category, whether in politics, scholarship, or art criticism. The concept of partiality is, however – and this has been largely overlooked – not a genuinely socialist one ‘invented’, for instance, by certain nineteenth- or early twentieth-century theorists of the working

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<sup>1</sup> This text was first published in German as Berns J.J., “‘Parteilichkeit’ und Zeitungswesen. Zur Rekonstruktion einer medienpolitischen Diskussion an der Wende vom 17. zum 18. Jahrhundert”, in Haug W.F. (ed.), *Massen/Medien/Politik*, Argument-Sonderband 10 (Karlsruhe: 1976) 202–233; reprint in Berns J.J., *Die Jagd auf die Nymphe Echo. Zur Technisierung der Wahrnehmung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Bremen: 2011) 3–35.

class. It has a long pre-Marxist tradition, at least in the German-speaking world. The remarks that follow seek to illuminate a significant stage of this tradition.

The interest in this tradition cannot be satisfied by mere philological and etymological investigations. The point is not, for example, to provide a positivist supplement to the information on *Parteilichkeit* (partiality) in Grimm's dictionary. Rather, this essay will explore the real historical conditions that allowed the term *Parteylichkeit* (and the old spelling is retained here in order to mark the distance between the early and socialist dimensions of the term) to establish itself in the German vernacular. This historical framework can be described primarily as one of media history. After all, the term *Parteylichkeit* was critically practiced and ultimately became familiar in everyday language through the debate surrounding what was then the new and hotly contested medium of the newspaper.<sup>2</sup> To bring together conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and the history of the media is the chief aim of this study.

### 1. *The Impetus for the Discussion on the Politics of News*

The documents of the discussion on the politics of news that began more than three centuries ago and that form the topic of the present investigation have long been familiar, at least to scholars of newspaper studies.<sup>3</sup> Although they have been the object of scholarly reflection on several occasions since the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>4</sup> the aspect of partiality has never been studied in its own right and in depth.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this translation, 'newspaper' is used to render the German 'Zeitung'. As Berns notes below, this had a variety of uses in the period. English usage was also various: news-books, currantoes, and newsletters are all found. Though 'newspaper' only first emerged in English in 1667 (see *OED* s.v. newspaper, n. 1), and was not the most common term, it is nonetheless used here to avoid imposing more specific categories on material which does not fit them. For English categories of news publication in the period, see Raymond's contribution in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Most of these documents are available in excerpt or in their entirety and in German translation in Kurth K. (ed.), *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung. Die Urteile des Christophorus Besoldus (1629), Ahasver Fritsch (1676), Christian Weise (1676) und Tobias Peucer (1690) über den Gebrauch und Mißbrauch der Nachrichten* (Brno – Munich – Vienna: 1944); Blühm E. – Engelsing R. (eds.), *Die Zeitung. Deutsche Urteile und Dokumente von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Bremen: 1967); Stieler Kaspar, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz. Vollständiger Neudruck der Originalausgabe von 1695*, ed. G. Hagelweide (Bremen: 1969). I would like to thank Dr. Elger Blühm, director of Deutsche Presseforschung in Bremen, for making available additional documents that have not yet been reprinted.

<sup>4</sup> Apart from the publications mentioned in n. 3, whose prefaces, commentaries, and notes are worth consulting, the following works are especially useful: Prutz R.E., *Geschichte*

The critical discussion about newspapers took place in a period when newspapers already played a significant political and economic role in Germany. If periodicity, publicity, currency, and universality may be considered the general criteria for newspapers, we should recall that the earliest news periodicals already began appearing at the end of the sixteenth century in the form of the *Meßrelationen* (trade fair reports) published for the Frankfurt and Leipzig fairs yearly from 1584 and twice-yearly from 1588; that there is evidence of a monthly by the 1590s; that German weekly papers were being published in two cities (Strasbourg and Wolfenbüttel) from 1609, making them the oldest newspapers in the strict sense of the word in the world; and that the period after the Thirty Years' War saw the appearance of twice-weekly and from 1660 even daily newspapers.

It seems quite paradoxical that the 'belated nation' Germany, of all places, was anything but belated in this media sector. For despite the fact that, after the failure of the early bourgeois revolution, the Reformation and the Peasants War, Germany was increasingly lagging economically and politically behind its western European neighbours – especially Holland, which since the 1570s had been developing into an 'economic miracle', as well as England – it was initially the leading newspaper country in Europe. While, as we have seen, German weeklies were already appearing in 1609, in neighbouring countries the appearance of regular newspapers began with delays, in some cases substantial: 'In the Netherlands in 1618, in the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium) in 1620, in England in 1621, in Switzerland in 1622, in France in 1631 (though English and French newspapers had already been printed in the Netherlands in 1620), in Italy in 1643, in the Swedish language in 1645, in Spain and Poland in 1661 and in Danish in 1672'.<sup>5</sup>

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*des deutschen Journalismus*, vol. I (Hannover: 1845); Salomon L., *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesens*, 2 vols. (Oldenburg: 1906); d'Ester K., "Zur Geschichte der Zeitungsforschung vor 1800", *Westfälisches Magazin N.F.* 2 (1910) 214–217 and *Westfälisches Magazin N.F.* 3 (1911/12) 1–10; Schöne W., *Die Zeitung und ihre Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: 1928); Groth O., *Die Zeitung*, 4 vols. (Mannheim – Berlin – Leipzig: 1928–30); idem, *Geschichte der deutschen Zeitungswissenschaft* (Munich: 1948); Storz W., *Die Anfänge der Zeitungskunde* (Halle: 1931); Lindemann M., *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* (Berlin: 1969); Koszyk K., *Vorläufer der Massenpresse. Ökonomie und Publizistik zwischen Reformation und Französischer Revolution* (Munich: 1972); Haacke W., *Die politische Zeitschrift 1665 bis 1965*, vol. I (Stuttgart: 1968); Welke M., "Geschichte der Zeitung in den ersten Jahrhunderten ihres Bestehens. Kritische Bemerkungen zu M. Lindemanns 'Deutsche Presse bis 1815'", *Daphnis. Zeitschrift für Mittlere Deutsche Literatur* 3 (1974) 92–106.

<sup>5</sup> Elger Blühm in the foreword (p. VIII) to his documentations, prepared with Else Bogel, which finally placed early German newspaper history on a sound footing, Bogel E. – Blühm E., *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Bestandsverzeichnis mit historischen und bibliographischen Angaben*, 2 vols. (Bremen: 1971).

The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, whose most important early capitalist fronts, the Hansa and the South German commercial cities, could not withstand the pressures of foreign competition, especially when it was rendered far stronger by colonialism; the Germany so thoroughly and permanently weakened by the Thirty Years War that, as we know, its bourgeoisie took until the second half of the nineteenth century to measure up to the bourgeoisies of the neighbouring countries in technological and economic terms; this same Germany at any rate offered optimal preconditions for the early development of newspapers to the extent that it had clearly dominated book production and the book trade in Europe (and thus in what then counted as the world) ever since the invention of printing with moveable type in the mid-fifteenth century.

This does not, however, solve the paradox of German initiative in the realm of newspapers, but merely displaces it. We begin to get closer to an explanation if we take into account Göran Rystadt's study of *War News and Propaganda during the Thirty Years War*, which begins with the following assertion:

In fact, the Thirty Years' War signalled the breakthrough of modern propaganda to the degree that it used the printed word as a means to achieve its ends. Never before had the printing press been deployed so intensively in political and religious struggles.<sup>6</sup>

Blühm explains more generally still that

[p]romoted by territorial fragmentation and confessional disunity, Germany's periodical press developed into the richest and most varied one, with the Thirty Years' War furthering rather than hindering the development.<sup>7</sup>

This sketches the actual backdrop to the critical discussions about the newspaper, generated by its political topicality, that accompanied the development of the periodical press. Traditional journalism studies has reclaimed this discussion of the politics of news quite unpolitically for the early history of what German scholars have variously called *Zeitungsfor-schung* (d'Ester), *Zeitungswissenschaft* (Groth), or *Zeitungskunde* (Storz), all of which could be translated as newspaper studies.

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<sup>6</sup> Rystadt G., *Kriegsnachrichten und Propaganda während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Lund: 1960) 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* VIII. Also important is the information that we now know the names of 162 newspapers published between 1609 and 1700, which survive in some 50,000 different copies. Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* IX.

If the newspaper discussion only really got going after the Peace of Westphalia and found its highpoint in Kaspar Stieler's 1695 *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* (*Pleasures and Utility of the Newspaper*), a book of 762 pages in octavo, it was in part because this portentous peace, while initially absorbing the international and domestic, estate and princely, confessional, economic and socio-political adversaries, did little to resolve their old conflicts, and indeed created new potential for conflicts on top of them. The variegated nature of the German newspaper landscape corresponded to the patchwork of the empire, fragmented as it was into hundreds of more or less sovereign state formations. Where the empire was torn into countless 'parties' and factions, the question of partiality was bound to become a central question for the politics of news.

When scrutinizing the documents of the critical discussion on newspapers, which have doubtless not survived in their entirety, it is difficult to locate clear social and political frontlines in the conflict. The documents are often contradictory and overly given to compromise. Such ambiguity, however, is not necessarily the product of a subjective, individual indecisiveness on the part of the discussion partners, but rather of the objectively contradictory structure of the Holy Roman Empire itself. After all,

[t]he impotence of each separate sphere of life (one cannot speak here of estates or classes, but at most only of former estates and classes not yet born) did not allow any of them to gain exclusive domination. The inevitable consequence was that [...] the epoch of absolute monarchy [...] was seen here in its most stunted, semi-patriarchal form.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. *The Participants in the Discussion*

Given the origins, education, professional status, and modes of articulation of the participants, one could be forgiven for dismissing the debate on newspapers as a purely academic one. All those who spoke up in treatises, lectures, or sermon-like texts were university graduates, educated officials wise in the ways of the court and the city. This was true not just of the most important author on the subject, Kaspar Stieler (1632–1707), who was active as a judicial official at the courts of Jena, Weimar, and

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<sup>8</sup> Marx K. – Engels F., *Die deutsche Ideologie* (1845/46), in *Marx Engels Werke* (Berlin: 1956), vol. III, 178. English: *The German Ideology, Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three*, ed. C.J. Arthur (London: 1970) 98.

Holstein-Wiesenburg before finally settling as an independent scholar in his home city of Erfurt in 1689.<sup>9</sup>

The authors of the not very extensive but nonetheless divisive texts that actually launched the newspaper dispute of 1676 – Ahasver Fritsch (1629–1701) and Christian Weise (1642–1708) – were also academics. In 1676, the jurist Fritsch, who had worked his way up from impoverished origins to a position as tutor to young noblemen, president of a Consistorium and ultimately chancellor at the court of the counts of Schwarzburg-Rodolstadt, published his *Discursus de Novellarum, quas vocant Neue Zeitunge/ hodierno usu et abusu* (*Discourse on the present use and abuse of the latest news, known as Neue Zeitunge*),<sup>10</sup> a text obviously dictated by the fear that such a rapidly spreading medium might endanger the absolutist order; reason enough to call into question the *raison d'être* of the newspaper.<sup>11</sup> Weise, son of a secondary schoolmaster, did not share such conservative, culturally pessimistic doubts. As a poet and rhetorician and not least as a politically committed educator, he was one of the most refreshing figures of the waning Baroque century. The experience he had gained as a professor of politics, rhetoric, and poetry at the academy for young noblemen in Weißenfels, explicating newspapers as part of his instruction,<sup>12</sup> flowed into his own *Schediasma curiosum de lectione Novellarum* (*Curious Ideas on the Reading of Nouvelles or Zeitungen*).<sup>13</sup> The unplanned but nonetheless – from the perspective of social and media history – not coincidental simultaneity of the publications in which two well-known men of learning elucidated the problem of the newspaper in such disparate ways, thereby elevating it to an official object of scrutiny, promoted a certain division among the authors who followed, which while

<sup>9</sup> See Hagelweide's introduction to the Stieler reprint, which also contains a brief account of the state of research on Stieler.

<sup>10</sup> Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 117–127. For a German translation of the original Latin text, see 33–44.

<sup>11</sup> See Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 15 f.; Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 16 ff.; Mencke Joh. Burchard (ed.), *Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Leipzig, Theophil Georgi und Johann Grosses Erben: 1715) col. 765; Jöcher Christian Gottlieb (ed.), *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, vol. II (Leipzig, Johann Friedrich Gleditsch: 1750) cols. 772–776.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Weise's life and education, with additional bibliography, see Barner W., *Barockrhetorik. Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen* (Tübingen: 1970) 193 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Original Latin in Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung*; translation 43–85. See the assessment in Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 17 f.; Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 18 ff.; Blümm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 54 ff.



not leading to a definitive polarization, nevertheless produced a variety of overlaps between the two tendencies.

In 1679, the Rothenburg superintendent Johann Ludwig Hartmann (1640–1684)<sup>14</sup> sought to strengthen Fritsch's position with a circuitous and blustering sermon "Unzeitige Neue – Zeitungs – Sucht / und Vorwitziger Kriegs – Discoursen Flucht" ("Untimely news mania, and the curious flight of war discourse"), which he dedicated to Fritsch as his 'Fautori & Amico'.<sup>15</sup> The Altona Latin School rector Daniel Hartnack (1642–1708),<sup>16</sup> who was known for his numerous polemics, articulated himself in a far more liberal manner in his 1688 *Erachten Von Einrichtung Der Alten Teutschen und neuen Europäischen Historien* (*Considerations on the arrangement of the old German and new European histories*),<sup>17</sup> four chapters of which he devoted to the defence of newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that the Theological Faculty of Leipzig University accepted two doctoral theses on the subject of newspapers shortly thereafter – the first submitted in 1690 by the otherwise unknown Tobias Peucer under the title *De relationibus novellis* (*On newspaper reports*),<sup>19</sup> the second in 1695 by the also otherwise unknown Andreas Hofmann under the title *De Novellis earumque cum fructu legendarum requisitis potioribus* (*On newspapers and the necessary conditions for reading them productively*)<sup>20</sup> – should be taken not so much as an indicator of the shift of the newspaper discussion to the academic sphere, but rather as a clear sign that some universities had opened their hermetically scholarly and classically humanist educational canon to include a mode of 'political' training more in touch with reality.<sup>21</sup> Both theological dissertations largely followed Weise's position,

<sup>14</sup> See Mencke, *Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon* col. 930; Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* col. 1382.

<sup>15</sup> See Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 16 f.; Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* 136 f.

<sup>16</sup> Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* cols. 1384–1386.

<sup>17</sup> Hartnack Daniel, *Erachten Von Einrichtung der Alten Teutschen und neuen Europäischen Historien* (Celle, Hieronymus Friedrich Hoffmann: 1688). Cf. Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 18 f.

<sup>18</sup> Hartnack, *Erachten* 59–103.

<sup>19</sup> Original Latin in Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 162–184, German translation 87–112.

<sup>20</sup> See Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 23; Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 26.

<sup>21</sup> This opening is affirmed by three other dissertations written before the turn of the century: Valentini Michael Bernhard – Tacke Eberhard, *De novellarum usu et abusu in rebus physicomedicis* (Gießen, Henning Müller: 1707), Kahl Christian – Körber Johann Melchior, *De usu Novellarum in orationibus* (Leipzig, Christian Schlovien: 1699) and Stryk Elias

and did so in a stiffly moralistic manner. This was not the only instance of the major impact of Weise's relatively short text; the Latin version was reprinted twice (1685 and 1696) and the very free German translation by the Dresden secondary schoolmaster Christian Juncker went through two printings (1703 and 1706). Stieler, too, felt he owed much to the pioneer Weise, borrowing the motto for his book – 'Nova tum judicunditatis, tum necessitatis causa amplector' ('I love the new both for its convenience and its necessity')<sup>22</sup> – from the preface to Weise's *Schediasma*.

The discussion culminated, as we have seen, in Stieler's comprehensive, complex, and verbosely learned treatise of 1695. After that, it is mainly two early eighteenth-century texts by Johann Peter Ludwig (1668–1743) and Paul Jacob Marperger (1565–1730) that are relevant in this context. Although it offers no noteworthy new arguments, Ludwig's 1700 lecture 'On the Use and Abuse of Newspapers/ Given at the Opening of a College, Anno 1700',<sup>23</sup> which was published in 1705, deserves attention as a document of the newspaper explication now undertaken as a matter of course in the university setting. The law lecturer and Prussian court historian was later ennobled for his services to the Prussian Crown. Marperger, an economist and one of the most popular German cameralists, then entered the discussion. His *Guide to the proper Understanding and useful Reading [...] of regular and irregular Newspapers or Gazettes/ as well as so-called Journals*, published in 1726, no longer spends time questioning the *raison d'être* of newspapers, but seeks instead to offer practical advice on how best to utilize the new medium, based on international experience.<sup>24</sup>

These were the most important participants in the discussion. But can we really circumscribe the discussion in this way?

Naturally, even before 1676 some people had begun to reflect on the effects of the constantly expanding traffic in information and the means of controlling it. They were mainly users of the old, non-public, commer-

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August – Hagen Samuel Friedrich, *Disputatio juridica de jure novellarum* (Kiel, Joachim Reumann: 1697). See Groth, *Geschichte der Zeitungswissenschaft* 26.

<sup>22</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 7.

<sup>23</sup> "Von Gebrauch und Mißbrauch Der Zeitungen/ Bey Eröffnung eines Collegii geführt. Anno 1700", in Ludwig Johann Peter, *Gesamte Kleine Teutsche Schrifften* (Halle, Rengers Buchladen: 1705) 80–111; Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 74–97; Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* cols. 199 f.

<sup>24</sup> Marperger, *Anleitung Zum rechten Verstand und nutzbarer Lesung [...] Ordentlicher und Außserordentlicher Zeitungen oder Avisen/ Wie auch Der so genannten Journalen*. See Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 94–97; Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, vol. III, cols. 199 f.

cial and princely information systems:<sup>25</sup> first and foremost the secular and ecclesiastical authorities who, depending on their position of power, sought to secure territorial or even (in the case of the Catholic Church) worldwide control and detailed censorship of all products of the printing press.<sup>26</sup> The information gatherers and newspaper producers, however, reflected on the effect of the new medium from the standpoint of their own particular interests. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century they appealed to their readers, whether in the newspapers themselves or in separate advertising flyers, to promote broader recognition of their achievements and in the process sometimes arrived at fundamental and thus forward-looking appraisals.<sup>27</sup> And the many newspaper privileges and edicts issued by the authorities, the correspondence of editors, and even passages and chapters in many devotional and anecdotal books as well as novels and collections of sermons also address aspects of the theory, practice, and above all the critique of newspapers.

Thus throughout the seventeenth century, the discussions surrounding the newspaper were by no means expressed only in certain media or literary and scholarly genres. We need to keep in mind that the hottest debates and conflicts over newspapers at the time were probably conducted in princely and municipal administrative bodies, above all in the consistories, which were responsible for the book trade and education, and ultimately also in the schools and universities. To that extent the surviving and known printed documents represent but a fraction of the overall discussion.

<sup>25</sup> On the history of commercial capitalist and princely communication systems, see Kleinpaul J., *Die Fuggerzeitungen. 1568–1605* (Leipzig: 1921); idem, *Das Nachrichtenwesen der deutschen Fürsten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: 1930).

<sup>26</sup> On the history of ecclesiastical and secular censorship, see Kapp F., *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels bis in das 17. Jahrhundert*, vol. I (Leipzig: 1886) and Goldfriedrich J., *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, vol. II (Leipzig: 1908). E. Traumann's dissertation *Zeitung und kirchliche Zensur. Ein Beitrag zur Pressekunde. Vergleichende und geschichtliche Darstellung* (Heidelberg: 1936) is dissatisfying. Traumann traces the papal church's tradition of censorship only very abstractly, ignoring concrete instances of territorially specific newspaper censorship such as occurred mainly in southern Germany during the seventeenth century. Franz Schneider has pointed out that Gabriel Puytherbault's 1549 treatise is probably the oldest work dealing with printed news. We cannot consider it a work of newspaper studies, however, since news periodicals were not yet being published at the time. See Schneider F., "Die Schrift Gabriel Putherbeiens von Thuron aus dem Jahre 1549/1581 in ihrer publizistikwissenschaftlichen Bedeutung", *Publizistik* 8, 4 (1963) 354 ff.

<sup>27</sup> See Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 17 ff.; 41 f., which offers texts by J. Carolus, G. Wintermonat, J.Th. Schönwetter, G. Greflinger and D. Paulli.

If we nonetheless permit ourselves to posit the period between 1676 and 1726 as that of the 'newspaper discussion' proper, it is because separately published, relatively numerous, and relatively extensive treatises devoted to the new medium only began to appear in 1676, a phenomenon that clearly waned around the middle of the eighteenth century. During this phase, the intensity and continuity of the discussion were particularly marked. To be sure, one essay cannot explore the full extent of this discussion. It will become evident, however, that inquiring into the problem of partiality takes us to the very heart of the debate. In what follows, we will begin with Kaspar Stieler as our key witness. In the main, the other authors will only be brought in when their assessments are likely to shed light on an individual aspect of the problem.

### 3. *The Maxims of Unparteylichkeit*

Explaining the qualifications and duties of a *Zeitunger* (newsman), Stieler notes that 'impartiality is needed here as well'.<sup>28</sup> It is important to know that in the seventeenth century, the functions of news gatherer, editor, printer, and publisher were generally not yet clearly distinguished from one another, and indeed often combined with those of an officially privileged postmaster. The title *Zeitunger* encompassed all of these functions. One can show that this multifunctionality of the office of newsman brought with it multifarious threats to the expectation of impartiality. Stieler, who must have been very well acquainted with newspaper practice, since his father-in-law was a newsman in Erfurt,<sup>29</sup> typified this as follows:

Moreover, a Newsman must be impartial. [...] If, accordingly, a Post-master who is quite French were to take it upon himself / to oppress the Imperial / or Coalition Side/ with negative News / but adhere to the French Party / boasting much of their Victories and Institutions / this would suit him most ill. And for that very reason he should also [...] not be too gullible / but rather look to the Direction / whence a Bit of News comes? One rarely hears anything good and positive about the Germans from Paris / but a good deal of grand and splendid Blustering and Boasting / whereby, however, any Harm / suffered by the French / is generally minimized / or perhaps even suppressed: just as the Vienna Newspapers for the most Part render the Christian Army large / and the Turkish Force very small and paltry: And so it is with other Courts and Towns / where Partiality rules over Truth. Wise Post-masters do not permit themselves to be buffeted by every Wind and do

<sup>28</sup> 'Unparteylichkeit ist hier auch nötig': Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 49.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hagelweide's introduction in Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* XIV.

not readily believe every Account / whether it comes from East or West / but wait instead / either for Confirmation by future Post / or to see / whether the Same is reported from other Places?<sup>30</sup>

As Stieler shows, the newsman lives in a world defined by partiality. Territorial and local political partiality prevailed at the courts and in the cities, while national partiality accentuated by military conflicts determined the relationships between European countries (for instance France and Germany), confessional partiality thwarted the internal unity of Christendom, which also had to contend with the partiality of Islam coming from outside (the Turkish wars). Such a divergence of interests, which permeated all domestic and international relations, could not leave the newspaper business untouched. It was not for nothing that Stieler took it as a given that the suppliers of information upon whom every newsman depended were not free of partiality.

We should not lose sight of the fact that newspapers in those days had nothing approaching a tight network of professional correspondents. Permanent correspondents did exist, most of them diplomats or chargé d'affaires living abroad; and naturally the postmasters. The number of occasional correspondents was far greater, however, and they were mainly merchants, military officers, seamen, clerics and scholars.<sup>31</sup> As Stieler noted, the newspapers even had to rely on incidental informants from the lower classes,

What material Foreigners and travelling Folk / Soldiers down on their luck / and Deserters / indeed even Beggars and Vagabonds / have given to the Newspapers over and over again / is familiar to us from the Newspapers themselves /

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<sup>30</sup> 'Ferners muß ein Zeitunger unparteyisch seyn. [...] Wenn demnach ein Post-Meister / der gut Französisch ist / sich unterwinden wollte / die Kayserliche / oder den Aliirten Teil / mit wiedrigen Zeitungen zu beschweren / derer Franzosen Partey hingegen zuhalten / viel von ihren Siegen und Anstalten zu prangen / das würde ihm sehr übel bekommen. Und eben dar um soll er auch [...] nicht alzuleichtglaubig seyn / sondern betrachten / von welchem Ort eine Zeitung herkomme? Aus Paris wird man selten was gutes und vorträgliches von den Deutschen vernemen / aber wol von grossen und prächtigen Rodomontaden und Aufschneidereyen / worbey jedoch ein Schade / den die Franzosen erlitten / meistens verringert / oder wol gar verschwiegen seyn wird: gleich wie die Wiener Zeitungen mehrern teils die Christliche Armee groß / die Türkische-Macht aber sehr klein und geringe machen werden: Und also mit andern Höfen und Städten mehr/ wo die Parteylichkeit über die Wahrheit herschet. Was kluge Post-Meister seyn lassen sich nicht von iedem Winde hin und wieder bewegen und trauen nicht leichtlich einer jeden Relation / sie komme von Osten oder Westen / sondern warten / entweder der Bestätigung bey der künftigen Post / oder sehen zu / ob auch von andern Orten dergleichen gemeldet werde?' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 49.

<sup>31</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 15 ff; Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* 30 f.

and often revealed by them / things one otherwise would never have learnt from any Post House or the Court of any Potentate.<sup>32</sup>

To be sure, the majority of these informants were not directly associated with any particular newspaper. The flood of news went through certain 'news collectors', the forerunners of today's press agencies, which had become established at certain important intersections of commercial and postal traffic. These news collectors compiled the individual pieces of information and sold them to the newspapers, which also subscribed to numerous foreign newspapers and purchased topical broadsheets as well. The individual entrepreneur then assembled his newspaper from this large array of handwritten and printed news.<sup>33</sup> Since every newsman was privy to a flood of information whose quality he could not judge on the spot, he risked being taken in by the partisan interests of his informants. For that reason, Stieler recommends paying attention to the source of a piece of news, because that could help to draw conclusions about its partiality.

It cannot be denied / that a Newspaper Writer is also a Man / who is imperfect / and capable of Error: however / HE does not write: I have seen this or that with my own Eyes / heard with my own Ears/ and touched with my own Hands/ but rather sets above each Piece of News / the Place and the Date / or the Day / also stating: it is reported from Turin / from Brussels / from Peterwardein etc.: An Army Courier has brought with him: It is reported / whether should etc. and therefore he sufficiently protects himself / in stating / how he received it. And / even if some incorrect Information should arrive from a nearby Place / it is not up to him / to send his own Messenger there / and investigate / and have certain People swear to the Matter. He lies not / who without Malice aforethought recounts Something / that later proves otherwise / especially / if he has no Suspicion / that it is untrue. The mentioned Herr Weise admits himself in the Preface to the aforementioned Work that fathoming the pure Truth among so many Partialities and Collections of divers Rumours / is much like / seeking Middy in the Evening Twilight.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 'Was ferner die Fremde und reisende Leute / die ins Elend vertriebene / auch ausgerissene Soldaten / ja sogar Bettler und Landfarer / je und je vor Materie zu den Zeitungen gegeben haben und noch geben / ist aus den Zeitungen selbst bekannt / und durch sie vielmals offenbar worden / was man sonst in keinen Posthause und bey keines Potentaten Hofstat hätte erfahren mögen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 17.

<sup>33</sup> See Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 28 ff.; Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* 27.

<sup>34</sup> 'Nicht ist zu verneinen / daß auch ein Zeitungs-Schreiber ein Mensch sey / der nicht vollkommen ist / und irren kann: alleine / ER schreibt nicht: dieses und jenes habe ich mit meinen Augen gesehen / mit meinen Ohren gehöret / und mit meinen Händen betastet / sondern setzet bey jeder Zeitung oben über / den Ort und das Datum / oder den Tag / meldet auch wol dabey: aus Turin / von Brüssel / von Peterwardein etc. wird berichtet:

A glance at the newspapers of the seventeenth century, which is made easier by the documentations of Schöne and Bogel and Blühm,<sup>35</sup> shows that this principle of the 'relata refero' was in fact largely observed. One frequently sees not only that a piece of information's dependence on perspective is marked by the place of origin and date, but also that the news item itself captures the perspective of the informant by rendering him grammatically visible as the subject of the statement. Here are a few examples

Prague/ 8th Julii. So that *We* may not be utterly abandoned / and fall into the most extreme Disorder and complete Ruin / their Imperial Majest. intend to send the Lord Burggrave and a Governor to reside here [...].<sup>36</sup>

From Venice, 27th 7bs. Since *my* Most Recent [writing] *we* have received News from the Camps of Casal / that the French have made various Attacks on the Spanish Camps [...].<sup>37</sup>

From Lyons / 16th 7bs. *OUr* King has been very unwell for a number of Days [...].<sup>38</sup>

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Ein Courier aus der Armee bringet mit: Es will verlauten / ob sollte etc. und darmit ver-  
wahret er sich zur genüge / indem er es ausgiebt / wie er es empfangen hat. Und / ob  
auch gleich aus einem nahen Ort etwas unrichtiges eingelaufen wäre / so ist er doch nicht  
schuldig / eigene Boten dahin zu schicken / Nachfrage zu tuhn / und darüber gewisse  
Leute beeydigen zulassen. Der leuget nicht / wer ohne bösen Vorsatz eine Sache / die sich  
hernach anders befindet / erzehlet / zumal / wann er nicht vermutet / daß es unwahr sey.  
Wolermelter Herr Weise gestehet selber in der Vorrede berürter Schrift: Daß bey so vielen  
Parteylichkeiten und Auffangungen des mannigfaltigen Gerüchts die reine Wahrheit zu  
ergründen / eben so viel sey / als wenn ich in der Abends-Demmerung den Mittag suchen  
wollte.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 57 f. Stieler and his contemporaries used the word  
*Zeitung* to refer to both the individual item of news (as he does here in the quotation)  
and the ensemble of news, that is, the newspaper (in German, *Zeitung*) in the sense we  
use it today. Weise's original text, to which Stieler refers, is reprinted in Kurth, *Die ältesten  
Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 132.

<sup>35</sup> Schöne W., *Die deutsche Zeitung des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts in Abbildungen*. 400  
Faksimiledrucke (Leipzig: 1940); Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhun-*  
*derts*, vol. II.

<sup>36</sup> 'Praag / vom 8. Julii. Damit *wir* nicht so gar verlassen blieben / und in eusserste  
Unordnung und vollen Ruin verfallen mochten / wollen ihre Kayserl. Majest. Dem Herrn  
Ober-Burggrafen und einen Herrn Stadthalter alhier zu residiren herein schikken [...].'  
Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* 147. Emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> 'Aus Venedig vom 27. 7bs. Seithero *meines* Jüngsten [sc. Schreibens; J.J.B.] haben *wir*  
auß dem Läger von Casal Zeitung bekommen / daß die Frantzosen unterschiedliche Aus-  
fälle auff das Spanische Läger gethan [...].' Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17.  
Jahrhunderts* 85.

<sup>38</sup> 'Aus Lion / vom 16. 7bs. *UNser* König hat sich etliche Tage sehr vbel befunden [...].'  
Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* 85.



Paris 8th Martii. A few Days ago the Duc de Roannez returned from Candia with *our* Volunteers [...].<sup>39</sup>

The advantage of such subject-bound news is obvious: the newspaper editor is not responsible for paying salaries. He can best manufacture impartiality by gathering a large and contrasting plurality of perspective-dependent – and in this dependency authentic – news items in his paper.

Here we come to an essential principle of the early newspapers: in the interest of credibility, the informant – but not the newsmen – could or should appear as a subject, could or should express his position. One could, with slight exaggeration, refer to this early phase as that of the *subjectless* newspaper. The newsmen was permitted to appear as a subject, as an author, only on special occasions – for example when wishing readers a happy new year, congratulating the authorities for something or other – or in the masthead.<sup>40</sup> Otherwise, he disappeared behind the news, or rather behind the subjects of the many items that came in from various places.

A look at the front pages and mastheads of seventeenth-century newspapers reveals that the maxim of impartiality, as a sort of promise from the publisher, frequently already occurred in the title. The masthead of a weekly paper, for example, announced the following:

New Impartial Newspaper and Gazette / Compiled from the Most Credible Open Letters from all Places / Cities and Countries / in this Year of 1623 by the Old Calendar.<sup>41</sup>

Or here is the annual title of a Leipzig daily paper:

First Volume of the News of War and Worldly Events arriving new daily or Compilation of impartial Nouvelles, such as have taken place in the year 1660 in and outside Christendom / and arrive in Writing at Leipzig from Day to Day [...].<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> 'Pariß vom 8. Martij. Vor wenigen Tagen ist der Duc de Roannez mit vnseren Freywilligen auß Candia zuruck kommen [...]'. Schöne, *Die Zeitung und ihre Wissenschaft* 213.

<sup>40</sup> For examples, see Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* 206, 215, 255, 262; and Schöne, *Die Zeitung und ihre Wissenschaft* 148, 154, 171, 221, 237, 241, 277, 287, 291, 398.

<sup>41</sup> 'Newe Vnpatheysche Zeittung vnd Relation / Auß den glaubwürdigisten Sendbriefen aller Ohrten / Stätt unnd Ländern zusamen getragen / dis 1623. Jahrs. Gerichtet auff den alten Calender'. Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 55. The work by Hillenbrand R., *Deutsche Zeitungstitel im Wandel der Zeiten* (Erlangen-Nuremberg, Diss.: 1963) offers no information on the matter discussed here, since it rather oddly notes only newspaper titles, but not their subtitles.

<sup>42</sup> 'Erster Jahr-Gang der Täglichs-neu-einlauffenden Kriegs- und Welt-Händel oder Zusammen-getragene unpartheyliche Nouvelles, Wie sich die Im Jahre 1660. inn- und



Or the subtitle of a weekly paper from Konstanz:

Everything extracted and compiled from impartial and credible Missives and Writings received.<sup>43</sup>

The promise of impartiality rarely stands alone. It is bolstered and varied in a number of ways with assertions that the paper reports 'truthfully', 'credibly', 'thoroughly', 'genuinely', 'faithfully', 'certainly', 'from trusted hands', 'dispassionately' or 'without any emotion'.<sup>44</sup> A glance at the mastheads of sixteenth-century newsletters, which did not yet appear periodically, and in which the reader was assured that the reports contained therein were 'truthful', 'true', 'certain', 'real', 'thorough' etc.,<sup>45</sup> shows that seventeenth-century newspapers were incidentally following a long tradition when they made such assertions. It is striking, however, that the formulaic assertion that the compilation of news was impartial (*unparteyisch* or *unparteylich*) is absent here, and only appears on newspaper titlepages of the seventeenth century, with the first documented appearance in 1623.<sup>46</sup> We may thus assume that for the publishers of the periodical press, who after all relied on a large, and therefore difficult to control, network of informants, the problem of partiality was unavoidable. The fact that the maxim of impartiality entered into the very titles of newspapers, and indeed possessed the character of an assertion, may be taken as an indicator that true impartiality was anything but self-evident.

But why did early newspaper practitioners and theorists find it desirable and indeed essential to commit themselves to impartiality? This interest cannot simply be explained as the consequence of a suddenly emerging individual morality or professional ethos. In his remarks on the question of the 'value of newspapers', Stieler offers the noteworthy information that '[t]hey are impartial / unafraid / unashamed and they do not blush either'.<sup>47</sup> He thus associates impartiality with fearlessness and a lack of shame; indeed, one might say that he regards fearlessness and a lack of

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außer der Christenheit begeben/ und Von Tagen zu Tagen in Leipzig schriftlich einkommen [...]'. Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 172.

<sup>43</sup> 'Alles auß vnpartheyischen überschickten Glaubwürdigen Missiven vnd Schriften extrahirt/ vnd zusammen getragen.' Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 193.

<sup>44</sup> Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II passim.

<sup>45</sup> Weller E., *Die ersten deutschen Zeitungen* (Stuttgart: 1872) passim.

<sup>46</sup> Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. I, 53.

<sup>47</sup> '[D]ieselben sind unparteyisch / fürchten sich nicht / schämen sich und erröten auch nicht': Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 20.

shame as prerequisites for impartiality. The argumentation suggests that somewhere, someone had good reason to fear. The context of the following quotation teaches us that in absolutist society, both the providers and the recipients of news had reason to be afraid:

The Worth of Newspapers arises from our human Insufficiency. For / even if Princes and Lords are surrounded by many Eyes and Ears; they are not omnipresent / nor are they omniscient / and they are doubtless also betrayed by their Informants / who report to them only good News / suppressing the bad. [...] If many an Emperor / King or Prince had the printed Newspapers delivered to him weekly / it would not take him many Years to learn / that a nearby Fortress had been captured by his Enemies / and that, as it were, the Knife was already at his Throat / since Jesuits / Fathers-Confessor and Ministers are merely skilled / in concealing all Misfortune / scratching their Masters' Ears with victories / good Fortune and Joys. Thence we see / the noble Work of the Newspapers / and how necessary they are / that we should / preserve them as a Shrine / so that their Free Run may not be interrupted.<sup>48</sup>

Thus the impartiality of the news must be guaranteed, also in the interests of 'princes and lords', because their own non-public information systems – which had long existed and persisted in the seventeenth and eighteenth century<sup>49</sup> – did not guarantee it. In the interest of the authorities or, as he often said, of the 'common good', Stieler declared the 'free run' of the newspapers sacrosanct.

#### 4. *Aporias of Impartiality*

That it would be wrong, however, to interpret Stieler's call for the 'free run' of newspapers as an early call for freedom of the press is evident from the fact that he also calls for official privileges and suggests that the news-

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<sup>48</sup> 'Der Wehrt der Zeitungen ergibt sich auch aus unserm menschlichen Unvermögen. Denn / ob gleich Fürsten und Herren viel Augen und Ohren um sich haben; so sind sie doch nicht allgegenwärtig / noch allwissend / werden auch wol von ihren Referenten betrogen / welche ihnen nur gute Zeitungen vortragen / die bösen aber verschweigen. [...] Wenn mancher Kayser / König oder Fürst die gedruckte Zeitungen sich wöchentlich reichen liesse / so würde er nicht in etlichen Jahren erst erfahren / daß eine nahe Vestung von seinen Feinden erobert / und also ihm das Messer gleichsam an die Kälte gesetzt worden / da sonst Jesuiten / Beichtväter und Ministri nur darauf gewant seyn / alles Unglückliche zu verhehlen / und nur von Siegen / Glück und Freuden ihrer Herren Ohren zu krauen. Hieraus erscheint / was vor ein edles Werk die Zeitungen / und wie Notwendig sie seyn / daß darüber / als ein Heiligtum zuhalten / das deren freyer Lauf nicht unterbrochen werde.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 20.

<sup>49</sup> See the works by Kleinpaul mentioned in n. 25.

man should swear an oath to the authorities.<sup>50</sup> He even recommends that newsmen submit to preventive censorship, since this could absolve them of responsibility for what they print:

So they do well / when / they submit the new [text] to the Printing Shop / with the Foreknowledge and Approval of the Authorities / and thereby absolve themselves of all Responsibility / particularly / when it has come from a Place / where there is an Overseer / who censors and checks the News / to see how far and safely they can be spread among the People / and these Overseers / or Censors must then assume Responsibility / and represent the Newspaper Editor.<sup>51</sup>

The maxim of impartiality accordingly does not involve press freedom, but rather a strict commitment to the interests of the authorities, to which the individual newsman was always subject. The subjectlessness of the newspaper mentioned above thus becomes more precise. The newsman quite simply cannot be impartial. He must reckon with partiality, and this calculation has a dual perspective: on the one hand, that of other sources of information from outside his community, and on the other that of the authorities. For the newspaper editor, it is important, and sometimes certainly even vital, that he not fall blindly for the partial reports of outside news providers. In the interest of his own authorities, however, he must sometimes be not merely authorized, but obliged, to put out and disseminate partisan news reports:

To the Extent, however / as often occurs / that the Lord and Authorities of the Place order / that an unattained Victory / an impending Siege of this or that Fortress / an intended Project / or other Matter be published in the Paper / it behoves the Post-Master / as a Subject, to obey.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 50 f.

<sup>51</sup> 'Tuhn sie derhalben wol / wann / mit der Obrigkeit Vorwissen und Genehmhaltung / sie das Neue in die Druckerey geben und darmit sich aller Verantwortung befreyen / zumal / wenn es also an einem Orte herkommens ist / daß ein Aufseher darüber gehalten wird / welcher die Novellen censiret und prüfet / wie weit und sicher sie unter das Volck kommen mögen / und diese Prüfer / oder Censores müssen alsdann davor stehen / und den Zeitungs-Ausgeber vertreten'. Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 48 f. – Peucer recommended preventive censorship (in Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 99) as did Ludwig, *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesens* 98.

<sup>52</sup> 'Wofern aber / wie oft geschiehet / der Herr und die Obrigkeit des Ortes befehlen würde / einen nie erhaltenen Sieg / eine vorsehende Belägerung dieser oder jener Festung / eine unterhabende Werbung / oder andere Anstalt in die Zeitung zutragen / so gebüret dem Post-Meister / als Untertanen / zu gehorchen'. Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 34.

Wherever the newsman has to represent the interests of his own authorities, the impartiality maxim is suspended. The argumentation takes on a veritably Macchiavellian tone:

The reason is / that the State often demands / that something unfounded be spread among the People / when it is conducive to the Common Good. [...] Such invented News has multiple benefits for the State / and / even should it deceive Friend and Foe; It suffices / that it now encourages, / now frightens / the Addressees / to a certain Degree [...].<sup>53</sup>

In this way Stieler modifies the emphatic maxim of impartiality quite decisively from a practical perspective or, more precisely, based on his insights into actual power relations. He does not abhor partiality as such, but expects it and even legitimizes it where it proves conducive to the 'interests of the state'.

Stieler's reflections on the relationship between newspapers and partiality are thus quite complex: first, we have the blanket call for newsmen to be impartial. Then, Stieler asserts that many news items issuing from various political camps are partisan. Third, Stieler defends the launching of partisan 'invented' news items where they might benefit the common good in the newsman's community.

There is also a fourth aspect. Stieler assumes as a matter of course that readers will consume newspapers from a partisan standpoint: 'One always reads and hears the News differently from others / depending on the Condition in which one finds oneself.'<sup>54</sup> And:

Let lively hearts consider / how sweet it is / that I can inform myself, from my very own chamber / [...] of what the Party / which I favour has wrought? I travel in my Mind through the wide World/ I sail across the Ocean / am present at Battles on Land and Sea [...] and do all this without the slightest Peril / Effort or Expense. I do not have to move a Muscle and yet in my Mind I shout in Triumph: not to mention / the Joy and Delight felt / by those / who see farther / and can undertake their own reflections.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> 'Die Ursache ist / daß es der Stat vielmals erfordert / etwas Ungegründetes unter das Volk zu bringen / wenn es dem gemeinen Wesen zuträglich ist. [...] Solche erdichtete Zeitungen haben ihren manigfaltigen Stats-Nutzen / und / ob sie schon Freund und Feind betrogen; So ist doch genug / daß sie denen Interessirten bald einen Mut / bald eine Furcht auf gewisse Maasse machen [...].' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 35.

<sup>54</sup> 'Es liest und höret immer einer die Zeitungen anders als der andere / nachdem er nemlich in einem Zustande sich befindet / an.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 122.

<sup>55</sup> 'Es bedenke ein aufgewecktes Herz / was dieses vor eine Süsse bringe / wenn ich in meiner Stube verständiget werden kan / [...] was diejenige Partey / derer ich zugehört bin ausgerichtet hat? Da reise ich in Gedanken durch die weite Welt / ich schiffe über Meer / bin bey den See- und Landschlachten gegenwärtig [...] und dieses alles ohne

Other seventeenth-century newspaper theorists made similar observations.<sup>56</sup> Reading the newspaper only becomes truly interesting when each reader has a certain partisan standpoint, and when the newsman is prepared and in a position to take account of this spectrum of diverse interests.

But how are we to reconcile these four angles from which Stieler discusses the problem of partiality? After all, the demand for impartiality among newsmen, to which Stieler adheres, is called into question by the other three aspects of his argument, in which the facticity of partiality in the news business is not just recognized but even partly legitimated. If one generalizes the declaration that the partisan launching of news items in the interest of the common good is not just permissible but even desirable, this also means that more or less all newspapers report in a partial manner, not only because they can, but also because they should and must do so from the standpoint of their community.

In this way, the argumentation leads to an open aporia: in the interest of those who supply the newspaper maker with information locally, he must also be eager to acquire impartial information from elsewhere. On behalf of the authorities, whom he represents to the outside world as a disseminator of news, he must be interested in spreading partisan news from his own camp. Ultimately, however, this means that the maxim of impartiality is only binding for the newspaper maker when it serves the interests of the authorities or his community.

##### 5. *The Real Basis of the Partiality Problem*

That the problem of the newsman's partiality was not an abstract academic one, but one rooted in German reality, becomes clear when we consult one of the most critical witnesses of the age, the constitutional lawyer Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694). In 1667, the thirty-five-year-old Heidelberg professor of law published his *De statu imperii Germanici* (anonymously, with good reason) in which he offers a detailed diagnosis of the ailing German Empire. He states, for example,

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einzig Gefahr / Mühe und Kosten. Ich versetze keinen Fuß und erhebe doch ein Jubel-Geschrey in meinen Gedanken: geschweige / was die / so etwas weiter sehen / und ihre Rückmeinung darbey haben können / vor eine Freude und Ergetzlichkeit darüber genießen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 21 f.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Hartmann Johann Ludwig, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht/ und Vorwitziger Kriegs-Discoursen Flucht* (Rotenburg, Friedrich Gustav Lipß: 1679) 16, or Johann Frisch (Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 49).

[t]here is now nothing left for us to say, but that *Germany* is an Irregular Body, and like some mis-shapen Monster, if it be measured by the common Rules of Politicks and Civil Prudence. So that in length of time, by the Lazyeasiness of the Emperors, the Ambition of the Princes, and the Turbulence of the Clergy or Churchmen, from a Regular Kingdom it sunk and degenerated to that degree, that it is not now so much as a *Limited Kingdom* (tho' the outward Shews and Appearances would seem to insinuate so much) nor is it a Body or System of many Sovereign States and Princes, knit and united in a League, but something (without a Name) that fluctates between these two. This Irregularity in its Constitution affords the matter of an inextricable and incurable Disease, and many internal Convulsions, whilst the Emperor is alwaies labouring to reduce it to the condition of a Regular Empire, Kingdom, or Monarchy; and the States on the other side are restlessly acquiring to themselves a full and perfect Liberty.<sup>57</sup>

Pufendorf then delineates more precisely the lines of conflicts and their conditions, including the rivalry between the princes and the cities:

The States are under different forms of Government, some of them being Princes and the rest Free Cities, and these are intermixed one with another. The Free Cities drive, for the most part, a considerable Trade, and their Wealth excites the Envy of the Princes, but especially when a great part of their Trade and Wealth ariseth from any of the Princes Dominions. [...] The Nobility are apt to despise the common People, and they are as prone to value themselves on the account of their Money, and to undervalue the Nobilities old Titles and exhausted Dominions. Lastly, Some of the Princes look on these Cities as a reproach to their Government, and think their own Subjects would live more contentedly under their Command, if these Instances of Popular Liberty were removed, and all occasions of comparing their own Condition with that of their Neighbours in these Cities were taken away.<sup>58</sup>

Then he points to the rivalry among the princes – to those between secular and ecclesiastical princes on the one hand and between prince-electors and princes on the other.<sup>59</sup> And he knew all too well that confessional disputes had more than merely heavenly dimensions:

These would not be sufficient Principles of Disorder, if the most effectual active Ferment, which can possibly affect the Minds of Men, I mean the *Difference of Religion*, were not added to all I have mentioned, which at this day divides *Germany*, and distracts it more than all the rest. Nor is the diversity

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<sup>57</sup> Pufendorf Samuel, *The Present State of Germany* (London, Richard Chiswell: 1690) 152 f.; German edition: Pufendorf Samuel, *Die Verfassung des deutschen Reiches. Übersetzung, Anmerkungen und Nachwort von Horst Denzer* (Stuttgart: 1976).

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem 178 f.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem 179 f.

of Opinions and the commonly practised, excluding each other out of the Kingdom of Heaven, (as Priests of diverse and contrary Opinions use to do) the only cause of their mutual hating each other: The Roman Catholicks charge the Protestants, That they have deprived them of a great part of their Wealth and Riches [...].<sup>60</sup>

Finally, he sees that the sovereignty of the imperial estates guaranteed by the Peace of Westphalia, i.e., their capacity to make foreign and domestic political alliances, has thwarted national unity:

That the Princes of *Germany* enter into Leagues, not only one with another, but with Foreign Princes too, and the more securely, because they have reserved to themselves a Liberty to do so in the Treaty of *Westphalia*, which not only divides the Princes of *Germany* into Factions, but gives those Strangers an opportunity to mould *Germany* to their own particular Interest and Wills, and by the assistance of their Allies, to insult on all the rest of the Princes, especially when the Design of those Leagues is not levell'd against other Foreign Princes, which might be born, but against the Members of the Empire.<sup>61</sup>

This sketch in quotations, the realistic nature of which recent historical scholarship has confirmed and enlarged upon, may teach us that such a monstrous Germany, fragmented as it was into hundreds of 'sovereign' states, could not possibly have a unified press. There was no central newspaper for the empire. The very fact that so many newspapers appeared in the empire speaks for the limited scope of each. As Blühm explains,

[d]uring the Thirty Years' War the periodical press spread throughout Germany, a movement that continued in the second half of the century. According to a conservative estimate, by 1648 German-language weekly papers were being published in about thirty, and by 1700 in more than seventy cities, some of them outside the borders of the empire. The number of publications was far greater, and their longevity varied.<sup>62</sup>

It is safe to say that the relatively large number of newspapers in those days cannot simply be taken as evidence of the cultural wealth and high level of education in the overall empire, if only because the various territorial and city-states did quite a good job of rigidly sealing themselves off from one another politically and confessionally by their local censorship practice. In particular, however, the – compared to today – relatively

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem 181.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem 182.

<sup>62</sup> Blühm E., "Zeitung und literarisches Leben im 17. Jahrhundert", in Schöne A. (ed.), *Stadt – Schule – Universität – Buchwesen und die deutsche Literatur im 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich: 1976) 492–505, here 494.



small print-runs of the newspapers show that these press organs were by no means likely to develop the integrative power that might have overcome the particular interests of the many small states. With a total population of some 16–18 million in the empire,<sup>63</sup> this was simply impossible when a newspaper press did not produce more than a few hundred, and at most 1500 copies weekly, twice-weekly, or occasionally even daily.<sup>64</sup>

The newspapers did not cover a broad geographical radius. To the extent that we can reconstruct it today, most copies of a print-run were distributed locally and within the territory of the authorities that licensed the publisher. To that extent, newspapers were almost exclusively regional in scope. Few copies crossed state borders, which were generally also censorship borders, most of these going to government agencies and the news centres of neighbouring or more distant countries, for instance as diplomatic post. It seems likely that the interest in 'foreign' newspapers depended on the political and economic importance of the place of publication. And yet we should take into account that the content of the early newspapers was not local or regional: 'Local reporting established itself in the press only slowly, since local censorship dealt especially strictly with it. Most early newspapers had an international orientation [...].'<sup>65</sup> When it came to reporting on foreign news from Europe more generally, the different regional enterprises did have certain emphases and a division of labour. Christian Weise, for example, expected particular insights into 'events in Poland and to some extent in Austria from the Breslau papers, events in the North from the Lübeck papers, events in England from the Hamburg papers, and events in France from the Frankfurt papers'.<sup>66</sup>

To be sure, this kind of specialization also offered opportunities to control and channel the news.

## 6. *The Practice of Partiality*

What the partisan practice of the newspapers looked like can only be suggested in outline, given the lack of coherent empirical studies on this

<sup>63</sup> See Steinberg S.H., *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg und der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Europa 1600–1660* (Göttingen: 1967) 132.

<sup>64</sup> Groth, *Die Zeitung* vol. I, 240. For a critique, see Welke, "Die Geschichte der Zeitung in den ersten Jahrhunderten ihres Bestehens" 99.

<sup>65</sup> Koszyk, *Vorläufer der Massenpresse* 51.

<sup>66</sup> Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 50; see also Ludwig, *Gesamte Kleine Deutsche Schriften* 101 ff.



question.<sup>67</sup> First of all, we can safely say that every newsman faced the partiality question in his everyday work to the extent that he had to choose from a flood of incoming information, which forced him to make decisions; decisions that the censors could thwart if he had not sufficiently internalized their criteria. Stieler informs us that

the Postmasters / though they receive much written and printed News / print scarcely one Quarter of it / but keep the rest hidden / informing nobody of it / but their most intimate Friends in Secret.<sup>68</sup>

Undoubtedly far more significant was the practice of deliberately spreading politically, economically, and militarily explosive misinformation, which governments themselves also used to great effect. It was a weapon of the authorities that could be deployed against both foreign sovereigns and one's own population. The discussion of media politics addressed this practice repeatedly. Christoph Besold already noted such a case in a 1666 article in his *Thesaurus practicus*, which Fritsch, Hartnack, Stieler and Marperger<sup>69</sup> subsequently also took up:

The new Newspapers also sometimes spread abroad [...] pseudo-political Secrets. [...] They disperse Victories, crush the opposing Side and invent Defeats in order to bewilder the People (for the World, as they say, wishes to be duped), so that it may champion this or that Party. Thus after the Jurensian defeat 'the Victory of the other Side was attributed and assigned to the Duc de Mayne: telling such a Lie, if one could insist upon it for a few Days, was worth several 1000 florins'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> On the manipulation of the news during the Thirty Years' War, see the detailed account in Rystadt, *Kriegsnachrichten und Propaganda während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*.

<sup>68</sup> '[D]aß die Postmeister / ob sie schon viel geschriebene und gedruckte Zeitungen bekommen / kaum den vierten Teil davon drucken lassen / das übrige aber bey sich verborgen behalten / und niemanden / als ihren sehr vertrauten Freunden darvon in geheim teil geben.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 48.

<sup>69</sup> See Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 40 (= Fritsch); Hartnack, *Erachten* 101; Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 34 f.; Marperger Paul Jacob, *Anleitung Zum rechten Verstand und nutzbarer Lesung [...] Ordentlicher und Außordentlicher Zeitungen oder Avisen/ Wie auch Der so genannten Journalen* (Halle: 1726) 32.

<sup>70</sup> 'Die neuen Zeitungen verbreiten [...] bisweilen auch pseudopolitische Geheimnisse. [...] Es werden Siege ausgesprengt, die Gegenseite wird niedergedrückt, Niederlagen werden erfunden, um das Volk (weil die Welt, wie man sagt, betrogen werden will) kopflos zu machen, damit es für diese oder jene Partei eintrete. So hat nach der Jurensischen Niederlage der Duc de Mayne die Victoria, welche doch auf der Gegenseite gewest, ihme attribuiert und zugeschrieben: sagend eine solche Lüge, wenn man es auf wenige Tagen beharren könne, sey viel 1000 fl. werth.' Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 31 f.

Blühm offers a series of examples to underline the fact that the authorities, especially the princes, learnt early on to integrate the public effect of launching misinformation into their diplomatic and military planning:

In 1610 Cardinal Khlesl, bishop of Vienna and advisor to King Matyas of Hungary, suggested spreading rumours about their own armaments via the gazettes in order to exert pressure on the emperor; in 1658 the *B(erliner) Einkommende Ordinar- und Postzeitungen* included a report on allegedly overheard remarks by Charles X Gustave that was intended to expose the Swedish threat to the whole world. In 1660 – after the Peace of Oliva – the Berlin newspaper printer Runge was threatened with punishment if he disrupted relations with Sweden by printing anti-Swedish news; in 1671 Elector Palatine Karl Ludwig denied in the *Heidelberger Zeitung* the – accurate – report in the Haarlem *Courant* that his daughter Elisabeth Charlotte had married the duke of Orléans.<sup>71</sup>

Like most early newspaper theorists, Johann Peter Ludwig welcomed such practices. He relates how the ‘state of Holland’ used them against its own citizens:

Then when the Common Man read of the permanent great Contributions in the last War and some of them wished to cause Trouble, News was disseminated in the Gazettes of unheard of Preparations from France by Land and Sea; of the threatened Invasion of the Low Countries and other formidable Matters / and thereby many Malcontents lost their Penury / being driven to willing Gifts for Fear of such things. Seeing that even the Common Man is so taken in and spoilt by such Curiosity / that he wishes for News of all Enterprises and for something to talk about; sometimes the ordinary Newspapers are caused to bring into general Circulation something different from what was in fact intended.<sup>72</sup>

In 1726 Marperger even reported that commercial and finance capitalists were seeking to outcompete one another by deliberately spreading misinformation:

<sup>71</sup> Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. I, IX f.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Dann als der gemeine Mann wegen immerwährenden grossen contributionen in dem letztern Krieg laß und zum Theil schwürig werden wollen: So hat man von unerhörten Zurüstungen aus Franckreich zu Wasser und Land; von Bedrohung eines Einfalls in den Niederlanden und andern formidablen Sachen in die Gazetten gestreuet / dardurch sich dann bey vielen malcontenten der Geitz verlohren/ weil sie aus Furcht sothaner Dinge zu willigen Gaben / getrieben worden seynd. Angesehen auch der gemeine Mann durch solche curiosité dergestalt eingenommen und verderbet ist / daß er von allen unternehmen gern Nachricht und zu reden haben will; so pflegt man auch manchmahl durch die ordinarie Zeitungen etwas anderes als in der That intendiret wird / in das gemeine Gerücht zubringen.’ Ludwig, *Gesamte Kleine Teutsche Schriften*, 56.

Among the Disseminators of false News, which the Distributor hopes will bring some Profit, one may chiefly reckon certain Merchants engaged in great maritime Trade and Commerce in Bills of Exchange and Stocks, their Mariners and their made-up News, by means of which they cause their fellow Citizens and Merchants Joy or Suffering, increasing or decreasing the Price of Stocks, Goods, Bills of Exchange and Assecurations, thereby improving their Cause and Custom amidst such a dubious Confusion of Minds.<sup>73</sup>

That accusations of partiality were ultimately also a potentially effective weapon in competition among newspaper publishers themselves is evident from sometimes bitter disputes between newsmen in Frankfurt in the 1620s and Augsburg in the 1680s. In these competitive struggles, which were especially severe when the enterprises were located in the same town and depended on the same circle of customers, confessional differences were played out and covered by different privileging strategies.<sup>74</sup>

This series of examples, which could doubtless be substantially expanded by local history research on individual newspapers, already shows drastically enough that the reality of information politics was anything but impartial. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the duty of impartiality was generally recognized – most plainly in the authorities' prohibition on commentary.

### 7. *Argumentation and Non-Commentary*

The early newspaper is subjectless to the extent that it is lacking in commentary. Stieler, for example, proscribes commentary on news items, on the assumption that

The newspaper Writers / reveal by their untimely Judgements / that they have precious little News to report / but rather seek only to fill the Paper /

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<sup>73</sup> 'Zu den Aussprengern falscher Zeitungen, durch welche der Ausbringer sich einen Nutzen zu machen suchet, möchte man vor allem auch einiger in grossen See- Wechsel- und Actien-Commerciis begriffener Kauff-Leute ihre Schiffer und selbst fingirte Zeitungen rechnen, vermittelt welcher sie ihren Mit-Bürgern und Handels-Genossen Freud oder Leid einprägen, den Preiß der Actien, Waaren, Wechsel und Assecurationen dadurch steigern oder schwächen, inmittelst in solcher zweiffelhafften Verwirrung der Gemüther ihre Sache und Kundschaft bessern.' Marperger, *Anleitung Zum rechten Verstand und nutzbarer Lesung* 33.

<sup>74</sup> On the conflict in Frankfurt, see Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 24 ff. On the conflict in Augsburg, see Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* 151 f.

putting in their two Pennies worth / which serves no other Purpose / than/  
to render their Presumption ridiculous [...].<sup>75</sup>

He even harboured misgivings about 'a strange kind of Newspaper / known as Reflexiones or Rück=gedanken'. These were periodicals 'which take / examine and check / the News of the preceding Weeks / Months / Half Years etc. / and express their political Opinions about them'. Examples were the very popular reports on the trade fairs or the *Theatrum Europäum*, which appeared in Frankfurt a.M. from 1633–1738. He was suspicious of such committed political and topical writing based on surveys of the newspapers, which, unlike the breathless daily, twice-weekly, and weekly papers, commented on events from a decidedly evaluative and speculative perspective:

They may have their subtle Uses / but often fail abominably enough / such / that their Authors at times should have made every Effort / to keep silent / and apply their fancied Wisdom and Prophecies to some other and more certain End / before / taking it upon themselves / to betray / their Partiality / disgracefully by Prevarication and Defamation.<sup>76</sup>

As a consequence, he speaks out in favour of a 'penalty for Partisans and bold Reflectionists'.<sup>77</sup> It would be hasty, however, to equate this moralizing disdain and official suppression of commentary on the news with a general prohibition on argumentation, for there is evidence that the rejection of commentary was accompanied by the readership's call for critical arguments. At any rate, some defenders of the newspaper saw commentaries on the news as a sort of hindrance to critical reasoning on the part of readers.

There are indications that presenting news without commentary did not merely provoke the readership to self-activity and reasoning, but already presupposed it. For how else was the reading individual to create a context of meaning out of the wealth of heterogeneous news items if the newspapers themselves offered neither commentaries nor any division

<sup>75</sup> '[D]ie Zeitungsschreiber / mit ihrem unzeitlichen Richten zu erkennen geben / daß sie nicht viel neues zu berichten haben / sondern bloß das Blat zu erfüllen / einen Senf darüber her machen / welcher zu nichts anders dienet / als / daß man die Naseweysheit derselben verlachtet [...].' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 27.

<sup>76</sup> 'Haben sonst ihren feinen Nutzen / fehlen aber zum ofteren abscheulich gnug / so / daß ihre Verfasser bisweilen was grosses drum geben solten / daß sie geschwiegen / und ihre eingebildete Weysheit und Profezeiungen zu was anders und gewissers angewendet hätten / bevorab / wann sie sich unterwinden / ihre Parteylichkeit / durch Wahrheit- und Ehren-Abschneidung schändlich zu verraten.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 54.

<sup>77</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 171.

into rubrics as aids to orientation? The newsman was not supposed to offer critical arguments, but the reader could and indeed had to do so.

The first German newspaper editors already reckoned with an active public. As early as 1609, in the annual preface to the Strasbourg *Relation*, Johann Carolus was encouraging his 'most gracious Readers' to 'blithely correct, alter, and improve' the 'Errata and Irregularities' unavoidable in any newspaper 'according to their judicious Knowledge'.<sup>78</sup> This was stated more plainly still in 1673 by the publisher Paulli, who promised to offer his newspaper naked and without commentary – *tanquam nudam Puel-lam*: 'so that anyone may clothe it as he will / and believe as much as he thinks'.<sup>79</sup> Where the newsman could not always vouch for the credibility and importance of the news, Peucer proposed that he should 'leave it up to the reasonable Reader to judge',<sup>80</sup> and Hartnack made even clearer demands of the intellectual self-activity of the newspaper reader: 'The understanding that the Reader demands of the Newsman / that he should be able to distinguish whether what is related is true or false / should also apply to himself / taking the Circumstances into account [...]'.<sup>81</sup> The newsman Fritsch defined these demands more precisely in 1676, declaring bluntly that newspaper reading only benefits the reader

[w]here he possesses enough Understanding / that he can find / and at the right Opportunity apply / the Kernel that lies hidden in the Shell of Circumstances. He who is not so clever, however / will have little or no Interest / in knowing what has happened or not.<sup>82</sup>

And he calls not just for individual reasoning, but for the exchange of opinions and discussion when he explains that the demand for new newspapers is great not just out of inquisitiveness (*Fürwitz*), but above all 'so that one may have the Opportunity of forming a useful Discourse / and

<sup>78</sup> Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 18.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem 45.

<sup>80</sup> Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 101.

<sup>81</sup> 'Den Verstand den der Leser von dem Nouvellisten erfordert / daß er solle unterscheiden können ob die Relation wahr oder falsch / den muß er auch bey sich selbst haben / die Umstände erwegen [...]'. Hartnack, *Erachten* 90.

<sup>82</sup> '[W]o er nur so viel verstandes hat / daß er den Kern so in den Schalen der Umstände verborgen lieget / finden / und bey rechter Gelegenheit applieren kan. Wer aber so witzig nicht ist / dem ist wenig oder nichts daran gelegen / ob er weiß was geschehen oder nicht.' Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 49.

learn thereby how others see the Matter / and whether an Agreement can be reached with the Ideas / we have conceived of it.’<sup>83</sup>

It was in the nature of things that readers did not wish to be left alone in pondering what they read in the newspaper. Marperger made the most emphatic argument in favour of promoting public reasoning, or discussion:

A moderate, reasonable Discourse, mixed with historical and political Reasons of State, on the newly arriving Gazettes, and Affairs of State and City that are on the Agenda is permissible, and far more laudable than the censorious Silence of many an arrogant Curmudgeon, who often makes a State Secret of the common Acts of Maids, as if the Welfare of the Republic depended upon it.<sup>84</sup>

He deemed it desirable that all newspapers should follow the example of the Hamburg, Dutch, and English newsmen and create their own distribution centres, which could also serve as sites of discussion:

Such Newspaper Shops, Boutiques or Trading Posts, especially if they are quite considerable, will accordingly serve the Assembly and Entretien of many curious Men of all Estates, learned and unlearned, Statesmen, Merchants and Soldiers, alien and local; whereby one may then enjoy listening to Discussions of all Manner of State and Worldly affairs, especially in Holland and the Port Towns, where Free Speech is not as risky as in other Places; and surely such Reflexions, Prognostications and Matters as are liable to elicit Speculation from learned Statesmen will also sometimes be addressed and aired.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> '[D]aß man Gelegenheit habe einen nützlichen Discurs zu formiren / dadurch man erfahren möge wie ein ander die Sache begreiffe / und obs überein komme mit denen Gedanken / die wir davon gefasset haben.' Blümm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 49 f.

<sup>84</sup> 'Ein moderates vernünftiges, mit Historischen und politischen Staats-Gründen vermischtes Discuriren, über die einlaufende Gazetten, und auf dem Tapet seyende Staats- und Stadt-Affairen ist erlaubt, und weit löblicher, als manches eingebildeten Saur-Topffs sein Catonisches Stillschweigen, welcher oft von gemeinen Mägde-Händeln solche Arcana machet, als wann die Wohlfahrt der Republic daran hienge.' Marperger, *Anleitung Zum rechten Verstand und nutzbarer Lesung* 38 f.

<sup>85</sup> 'Solche Zeitungs-Buden, Boutiques oder Comptoirs, wann sie zumal fein geraum seyn, dienen hernach zur Versammlung und Entretien vieler curiosen Leute von allerhand Ständen, Gelehrten und Ungelehrten, Staats- Kauff- und Kriegs-Leuten, Fremden und Einheimischen; Wobey dann mit Lust das raisonniren über allerhand Staats- und Welt-Handel, sonderlich in Holland und in denen See-Städten, wo das freye Reden nicht so verfänglich als anderer Orten ist, anhören kan; Und ist es gewiß, daß zuweilen solche Reflexiones, Prognostica und Materien auf das Tapet kommen und ventiliret werden, welche auch, gelehrten Staats-Leuten Speculationes zu machen, capables seyn.' Marperger, *Anleitung Zum rechten Verstand und nutzbarer Lesung* 21.

The authorities, however, regarded such pleasure in argumentation with misgivings. They also succeeded for a long time in preventing critical discussion from entering the newspapers themselves in the form of commentaries or even editorials. To be sure, from the 1680s the occasional newsman in Hamburg regularly prefaced the news with introductory articles, but this long remained the exception.<sup>86</sup> Frequently, the authorities explicitly banned argument or commentary in the newspapers under their jurisdiction. The Zurich town council, for instance, enacted such an edict in 1686,<sup>87</sup> and in 1726 an Electoral Saxon chancellery mandate in Dresden prohibited

[u]ntruthful Newspaper Writing and impermissible Argumentation regarding matters *in statum publicum*, as well as copying and printing extracts of harmful and untruthful News from foreign Newspapers on pain of Imprisonment, Banishment from the City and Fortress Confinement.<sup>88</sup>

#### 8. *The Question of the Public*

We cannot, to be sure, understand the emergence of public argumentation without taking into account its socially explosive nature (which the quotations hint at in several places). This dimension can best be explored by inquiring into the newspaper reading public and their horizon of interests. And this question is in fact the central one in the overall media politics discussion of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The fact that the problem of who could and should be able to read newspapers had become impossible to overlook was what made the discussion about newspapers necessary in the first place.

Since all of those involved in the discussion were quite eloquent precisely in this regard, it is striking that historians of newspapers and the public sphere have not adequately explored and consequently not coherently interpreted this point. Two criteria are repeatedly cited for the argument that the newspaper audience cannot have been a broad one: first,

<sup>86</sup> Welke, "Die Geschichte der Zeitung in den ersten Jahrhunderten ihres Bestehens" 104 f.

<sup>87</sup> Groth, *Die Zeitung* vol. I, 693 f.

<sup>88</sup> '[D]as unwahrhafte Zeitungs-Schreiben und unzulässige Raisonniiren von denen in statum Publicum lauffenden Sachen, ingleichen das abschreiben und extrahiren der nachtheiligen und unwahrhaften Nachrichten aus fremden Zeitungen bei Gefängnis, Verweisung von der Stadt und Vestungs-Bau.' Groth, *Die Zeitung* vol. I, 698.



the relatively high cost of newspapers, and second, the relatively high proportion of illiterates in the overall population in those days.

As to newspaper prices, Groth states that they were 'massively increased above all by the high postmasters' fees', which blocked the 'widespread distribution' of newspapers.<sup>89</sup> Further radicalizing Groth's claim, Jürgen Habermas asserts that newspaper announcements 'usually [...] did not reach the "common man" in this way, but at best the "educated classes"'.<sup>90</sup> Koszyk calculates that seventeenth-century newspapers

probably cost 6 pennies per issue on average. That corresponded to the price of half a pound of lard in those days. Those with only 6–8 kreuzers (or 24–32 pennies) a day at their disposal were not in a position to spend 20 per cent of that amount for a newspaper. The broad majority of the population, to the extent that they could read at all, were thus not available to purchase newspapers.<sup>91</sup>

When it comes to illiteracy, we have no reliable data for the period that interests us here; according to conservative estimates, every twentieth person, but at most every tenth person in the German-speaking region could read.<sup>92</sup> We should remember, however, that the proportion of illiterates was smaller in the larger cities than in the countryside, and that more people in the (Protestant) north and central German territories could read than in the east and south German, Bohemian, Bavarian, and Austrian (Catholic) lands.

Neither the problem of price nor that of education suffices to sketch a reliable picture of the audience for newspapers. They do not tell us who actually saw newspapers and whether they only became aware of newspaper reports by reading them personally. Ukena offers the following rough calculation for one newspaper:

Hamburg had some 40,000 inhabitants before the Thirty Years' War. In the second decade of the seventeenth century, the Hamburg *Wöchentliche Zeitung auß mehrerley örther* (Weekly News from Several Places) had a print run of more than 1,500. If we take a multiplier of only ten consumers per copy, we arrive at 15,000 readers or listeners!<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Groth, *Die Zeitung* vol. I, 240.

<sup>90</sup> Habermas J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. T. Burger with F. Lawrence (Cambridge: 1991) 22.

<sup>91</sup> Koszyk, *Vorläufer der Massenpresse* 45.

<sup>92</sup> Engelsing R., *Analphabetentum und Lektüre* (Stuttgart: 1973) 32; 49 f.

<sup>93</sup> Ukena P., "Buchanzeigen in den deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts" in Schöne (ed.), *Stadt – Schule – Universität – Buchwesen* 506–522, here 507.



Taking into consideration that this multiplier might be quite low – other authors consider that twice that number is possible<sup>94</sup> – we may assume that at least in the most important newspaper centres, newspapers were already reaching a mass public. Apart from Hamburg, the most significant German newspaper city of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, these centres included Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig, Danzig, Cologne, Vienna, Munich, Stettin, Altona, Berlin, and Nuremberg, among others.<sup>95</sup>

Participants in the contemporary newspaper discussion themselves offer important additions to such rough estimates and hypotheses. Stieler claimed that potentially, anyone could be a newspaper consumer: 'In general however we say / that all those who can read / and listen to others read / are capable of and adept / at using Newspapers.'<sup>96</sup> This power of the medium, which barriers of price and education could at least not wholly destroy, was bound to appear threatening to the degree that it also allowed for the levelling of all advantages of class and estate. (Public) reasoning and argumentation could be prohibited, but, as Stieler acknowledged, not fundamentally prevented: 'A Newspaper Reader / often has Thoughts / that no Emperor can stop / even should he strike him dead.'<sup>97</sup> Such assertions are based on the recognition that, however sophisticated the techniques of prohibition and command, the mind of the knowing subject cannot be completely controlled because it is determined by social reality. Since it was no secret that anyone who was anywhere near a newspaper reader could be accounted part of the audience, the most politically sensitive question was who should be allowed to consume newspapers and with what legitimation. The timorous circuitousness with which participants in the discussion approached the matter of audience already suggests that newspaper reception was not limited to the 'educated ranks' as Habermas and others believe. Ahasver Fritsch pointed out in 1676 that the 'new Newspaper Mania' had already 'gripped Persons of every Estate and Walk of Life'. Indeed, 'one even sometimes sees simple Country Folk

<sup>94</sup> Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre* 49.

<sup>95</sup> See Bogel – Blühhm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. I, VIII; Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* 100–106; Koszyk, *Vorläufer der Massenpresse* 49 f. The current state of the literature does not permit us to list the newspaper cities in the precise order of their importance.

<sup>96</sup> 'In gemein aber sagen wir / daß alle so da lesen / und lesen hören können / fähig und geschickt seyn / der Zeitungen sich zu bedienen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 38 f.

<sup>97</sup> 'Ein Zeitungs-Leser / hat oft Gedanken / die ihm kein Keyser wehren kan / wenn er ihn gleich todt schlüge.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 158.

reading the Newspapers themselves or listening attentively as others read them aloud'.<sup>98</sup>

Newspaper reading had also reached the churches and government offices. Fritsch's brother in spirit Hartmann similarly notes, with a pastoral shudder, that of late people had succumbed to newspaper mania 'in every Province / in every Town / in every Village / indeed in nearly every House'.<sup>99</sup> 'Clerical and secular / old and young / not just male Persons / but also Women'<sup>100</sup> were affected. And 'when Peasants come into Town / they want to know from the Townspeople / what News there is / what they have heard about the Enemy / the exorbitant Contributions / the thoroughly ruinous March-Throughs / and then about the winter Billets which have devastated the entire Country'.<sup>101</sup> He reserves especially vehement condemnation for the fact that not a few subjects

dare to make all Manner of Judgements over Matters extracted from the news: In many Places it has alas gone so far that / People can scarcely gather together without having to hear such/ since wherever two or three assemble in a House / indeed even a House of God / the first and most common Topic is the Justitia Armorum, Acts of War and News/ in which Princes and Lords / Soldiers and other Servants of the State are referred to as the Authors of Misfortune / and the Discourse often concludes at Last with much Railing/ Defaming/ Vilifying and Cursing.<sup>102</sup>

One might be forgiven for suspecting that the newspaper opponents Fritsch and Hartmann were deliberately exaggerating to make the case for their suggested ban. Defenders of newspapers such as Hartnack and Stieler said much the same thing, however. Hartnack declared that 'new Matters and

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<sup>98</sup> 'Ja sogar selbst auch schlichte Landsleute kann man bisweilen sehen, wie sie entweder Neue Zeitungen lesen oder denen, die solche lesen, aufmerksam zuhören.' Kurth, *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 37.

<sup>99</sup> Hartmann, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht* 8.

<sup>100</sup> 'Geistliche und Weltliche / Alte und Junge / nicht nur Manns-Personen / sondern auch die Weiber.' Hartmann, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht* 8.

<sup>101</sup> 'Kommen die Bauers-Leute in die Stadt / so wollen sie von den Statt Leuten auch wissen / was es neues gebe / was man vom Feind / von denen unerschwinglichen Contributionen / von denen grundverderblichen Durchzügen / und dann von denen das gantze Land ausmerglenden Winter-Quartieren höre.' Hartmann, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht* 10.

<sup>102</sup> '[S]ich unterstehet allerley Urtheil zu fällen über dem was man aus den Avisen hat gesogen und gezogen: Es ist leider in vielen Orthen so weit kommen / daß bey nahe nicht einige Zusammenkunft geschehen kan / da solche Leut sich nicht solten hören lassen / sintemal wo zwey oder drey in einem Hause / ja auch wohl in dem H. Gotteshause beyeinander sind / da ist fast die erste und meiste Red de justitia armorum, Krieges-Acten und Avisen / da müssen Fürsten und Herren / Soldaten und andere Standts-Bedienstete alles Unglück-Stiftere seyn und heissen / und wird offft der Discours mit eyffern / lästern / schmähen und fluchen endlich beschlossen.' Hartmann, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht* 55.

Newspapers are frequently discussed in the Newsmen's Shops / the Town Hall / or the Taverns'.<sup>103</sup> And Stieler remarked 'behold the Wonder in any City / what Crowds throng the Post-house on Newspaper Days; 'tis worse / than if they were distributing Donations etc.' And he reports that lowly court retainers were also eager for the latest news: 'The Lackeys / Stable-boys / Labourers / Gardeners and Gatekeepers sit together / and converse on matters taken from the Newspapers'.<sup>104</sup> Even Hartmann's claim that the newspaper consumers of the non-privileged estates 'often placed large Bets / and indeed engaged in much Disputation and contrarious Talk / having grown passionate',<sup>105</sup> may be considered realistic. After all, as early as 1656 a correspondent from Frankfurt am Main reported that a brawl had broken out in an inn there between the servants of a Catholic envoy and local journeymen blacksmiths because the two parties disagreed over divergent accounts in the Viennese and Frankfurt newspapers concerning the king of Sweden's alleged defeat in Poland.<sup>106</sup>

Newspaper theorists argued that the newspaper public should be restricted, but used different definitions. For political reasons, Fritsch and his followers essentially accepted only 'public individuals' – 'Publicae, ut Principes, publicae rei administratores, magistratus etc.',<sup>107</sup> while Weise and his supporters believed that 'private individuals' of the upper middle classes – academics of all professions, university students, pupils of the academic secondary schools and merchants – should also be respected or even encouraged for their interest in newspapers.

The two groups agreed, however, that the newspapers were not intended for the eyes of the peasant or plebeian lower orders. Stieler's argumentation exposes the political and economic core of this demand. He assures his readers that he does not

favour / Man- and Maidservants neglecting their Duties / to follow the latest Fables / loafing in the Marketplace and Streetcorners / chattering and gawking / wasting their Time and slowly returning home again sated. After all / what have they to do with Wars and Battles / the Courts of great Lords /

<sup>103</sup> '[I]n der Nouvellisten Laden / an dem Rathhause / oder in den Gasthäusern [...] von neuen Sachen und Zeitungen vielmahl geredet wird.' Hartnack, *Erachten* 70.

<sup>104</sup> 'Sitzen doch Lakeyen / Stallknechte / Kalfacter / Gärtner und Torhüter beysammen / und halten ihre Gespräche aus den Avisen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 79; 115.

<sup>105</sup> '[O]ffftmal grosse Wettungen entstehen / ja wohl gar viel Streit und widerwärtige Reden / nachdem man passionirt ist.' Hartmann, *Unzeitige Neue-Zeitungs-Sucht* 51 f.

<sup>106</sup> Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 37.

<sup>107</sup> This is according to Fritsch; see Kurth, *Die frühesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung* 38 f.; 122.

or their Marriages and Deaths? Since they already have more Orders / than they have time to carry out. We should also advise Artisans / common Citizens and Peasants in the Country / to await their Work in Town and Field and beforehand to read a Chapter from the Bible instead of such Newspapers.<sup>108</sup>

Or more blatantly still,

[t]herefore let the Newsmen / print his Newspapers / not / for the Charcoal-Makers in the Woods / or the Miners in the Shafts / indeed not even for the common Lansquenets in their Camps; for the only Concern of such Men / is that the Sky should not fall.<sup>109</sup>

To recapitulate, potentially anyone, and in reality a large number of people, already belonged to the newspaper public. The fact that apologists for the authorities defamed as a 'mania', that is, a sickness, the informational and communicative needs of the peasant and plebeian strata in particular – needs that economics, educational policy, and political restrictions had apparently not yet sufficiently constrained – suggests the considerable anxiety they felt about the newspaper's actual potential to become a mass medium, and indeed a medium of the masses. It betrays the fear that those who already 'have more orders than they have time to carry them out' might someday do something that they had not been instructed to do.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> '[N]icht allerdings gut heissen / daß Knechte und Mägde / mit hindansetzung ihrer Arbeit / allen neuen Mären nachlaufen / auf dem Markt und Ecken der Gassen stille stehen / Plauderey treiben und Maulaffen feil haben / darüber sich verseumen und langsam satt wieder nach Hause kommen. Denn / was haben sie mit Kriegen und Schlachten / grosser Herren Hofhaltung / oder mit Vermälung und Todesfällen zuschaffen? Da ihnen ohn diß mehr befohlen ist / als sie ausrichten können. Wir hätten auch Handwerks-Leuten / gemeinen Bürgern und Bauren auf dem Lande zurathen / anstatt solcher Zeitungslesung ihrer Handierungen zu Stadt und Felde abzuwarten und davor lieber ein Kapitel aus der Bibel zu lesen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 41.

<sup>109</sup> 'Also lasset der Avisen-Schreiber / seine Zeitungen drucken / nicht / üm des Kölers im Walde / noch üm des Bergmannes in den Schächten / ja nicht einmal üm der gemeinen Lands-Knechte im Feldläger willen; Denn dergleichen Leute haben keine andere Sorge / als / daß der Himmel nicht einfallen möge.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 65.

<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, there have not yet been any systematic studies of the degree to which the numerous regional peasant revolts, refusals to perform feudal obligations, strikes, and journeymen's and guild uprisings (for example in Cologne, Hamburg, Hildesheim, or Stuttgart) were noted in the newspapers of the various regions at the time. The catalogue of keywords in German press studies ('Deutsche Presseforschung' at Bremen University Library) offers some basic information. To be sure, it would probably be difficult to determine with any reliability how significant newspaper reports were for instigating or stabilizing such uprisings.

### 9. *Newspapers and the Bourgeoisie*

As to the question of whether the newspaper defenders among our sources represented bourgeois interests, it is safe to say that not one was a staunch opponent of feudal absolutism and its degenerate German form, territorial ("duodecimo") absolutism. Given the rigid censorship practice of the period, which affected all printers, such an author would have had no opportunity to express his ideas publicly. As the resolution of the Speyer imperial diet of 1570 stipulated, printing shops could only be established in princely residences, university towns, and free imperial cities.<sup>111</sup>

Nevertheless one can say that overall, the newspaper defenders objectively – and occasionally also subjectively and deliberately – promoted the bourgeois cause. Once again, the clearest example is Stieler, who argued that 'certain imperial and commercial cities alone [sic] / should be granted [the right to] print and sell newspapers'.<sup>112</sup> He was annoyed that 'in some small Towns and Seats of petty Courts worthless, foolish Grimaes are being spattered onto innocent Paper'.<sup>113</sup> Newsmen must realize that the newspaper business was important mainly for city dwellers: 'He finds sufficient Buyers in the Towns / where Reason, Courtesy and Skill are to be found / and of these alone we openly say / that Knowledge of World Events is highly necessary to them / and by no means superfluous.'<sup>114</sup> Distancing himself critically from the monarchical feudal systems of conveying state secrets, which were the only written information systems of the Middle Ages, Stieler welcomes the newspaper's guarantee of information for broad segments of the population:

The King, to be sure, acquired Knowledge of all Manner of Events within and outside his Realm / and doubtless conveyed such to his Confidants for their Perusal and Counsel: The Common Man, however, learnt little of it / and paid little Attention to it / for the Yoke of obedience to Royal Orders was laid upon him straightaway.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Koszyk, *Vorläufer der Massenpresse* 50.

<sup>112</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 165.

<sup>113</sup> Ibidem 12.

<sup>114</sup> 'Er findet aber seiner Abnehmer gnugsam in den Städten / wo Vernunft, Hübschheit und Geschicklichkeit anzutreffen ist / und von diesen allein sagen wir unverholen / daß die Wissenschaft der Welthandel ihnen hochnötig / und keines weges entbärlich sey.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 65.

<sup>115</sup> 'Der König erlangte zwar Kundschaft von allerhand Begebnis in und ausserhalb seines Reiches / eröffnete es auch wol seinen lieben Getreuen zur Überleg- und Berathschlagung: Der gemeine Mann aber wurde davon wenig berichtet / bekümmerte sich auch darum

Certainly he nowhere addresses the legitimacy, let alone the potential realization, of popular sovereignty, but he does at least dare to refer to the unidirectional structure of command and obedience under strict monarchy as the 'yoke' of the common man. In such a context the concept of *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (civil society) also becomes important. It is composed of persons of the 'burgher estate', *Hausväter* (paterfamilias) as the heads of 'private households', '[a]nd it suffices / that such a paterfamilias is also a member of the Civil Society / and that we define the house as everything / that nourishes and builds'.<sup>116</sup> The information newspapers provide is essential for the members of society so defined: 'He, however, who wishes to be and become wise / where he also desires to live in the State, Trade and Civil Society / must know the News / he must constantly read it / consider / note [...]'.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Stieler is convinced 'that upright Men / who are members of the Burgher Estate and have something to accomplish in such a Civil Society / cannot get on nearly as well / if they are ignorant of the Affairs of the World [...]'.<sup>118</sup> Like Weise and Hartnack before him, Stieler regards commercial capitalists not just as the most important originators of the newspaper business, but also as the true 'Guardians of the News[papers]' (*Zeitungsbewarer*),<sup>119</sup> 'since Men of Affairs cannot possibly do without them [the newspapers] / if they are to continue their Commerce without Losses and not stand in their own Way by neglecting to record and inquire after / the Progress and Sale of Goods'.<sup>120</sup>

That the newspaper could and must become an instrument of bourgeois emancipation can also be deduced from the fact that quite early on, the defenders of newspapers sought to have them introduced as an object and medium of instruction in the schools. After all, far more middle-class

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nicht / weil das Joch zu gehorsamen und den Königlichen Befehlen zu folgen ihm straks aufgelegt ward.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 24f.

<sup>116</sup> '[U]nd ist genugsam / daß solch ein Hausvater zugleich ein Mitglied der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft ist / und unter dem Hause alles verstanden werden kann / was sich nehret und bauet.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 100.

<sup>117</sup> 'Will aber wer klug seyn und werden / wo er anders in der Stats-Handels- und Bürgerl. Gesellschaft leben will / so muß er die Zeitungen wissen / er muß sie stets lesen / erwägen / merken [...]'. Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 4.

<sup>118</sup> '[D]aß brafe Leute / so in dem Bürgerlichen-Stande begriffen und in solcher Bürgerlichen-Gesellschaft etwas zu schaffen haben / noch lange nicht sowol fortkommen können / wenn sie der Welt-Handel unwissend seyn [...]'. Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 64.

<sup>119</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 15.

<sup>120</sup> '[I]ndem Handels-Leute deren [sc. der Zeitungen; J.J.B.] unmöglich missen können / wollen sie anders Handel und Wandel ohne Verlust fortsetzen und sich mit ihrer Nachlässigkeit im schreiben und forschen / nach der Wahren Lauf und Kauf / nicht selber in Lichten stehen.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 68.

than aristocratic children attended school. As early as 1654, the renowned educator Jan Amos Comenius specifically included newspaper reading in his curriculum for a Hungarian school. He was chiefly interested in commercial news, *ordinariae mercatorum novellae*, which was useful for expanding the pupils' knowledge of languages, history, and geography.<sup>121</sup> In 1657 there was also an attempt to introduce newspaper instruction into a secondary school in Breslau.<sup>122</sup> In advertisements in his *Nordischer Mercurius*, the Hamburg newsman Greflinger repeatedly recommended old newspapers as educational aids,<sup>123</sup> and in 1673 the Copenhagen publisher Paulli commended his newspaper not only 'to noble-minded long-distance Merchants on Sea and Land', but also to 'History-loving Youth'.<sup>124</sup> We already mentioned Christian Weise's newspaper instruction in a different connection above. From the 1670s, special newspaper seminars were also held at various Protestant universities,<sup>125</sup> and Weise, Stieler, and others never tired of illustrating in detail the utility of newspaper reading for nearly all academic professions. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the tradition of the German conversation lexicon, a form of popular encyclopaedia, also has its roots in this scholastic-bourgeois appropriation of newspapers: Johann Hübner, the editor of the first German conversation lexicon, the *Reales Staats- und Zeitungs-Lexicon*, which appeared in Leipzig in 1704, was director of the Gymnasium in Merseburg; he hoped to place this work in the hands of 'all Connoisseurs of Newspapers, and especially studying Youths still in their Prime'.<sup>126</sup>

To be sure, the political significance of newspapers for the German middle classes cannot be adequately determined based on the documents of the discussion considered here. In order to do so, we would need a sophisticated analysis of all surviving newspapers, an analysis that the most recent studies of newspaper history by Lindemann and Koszyk by no means accomplish. Important is Welke's suggestion that we acknowledge the early German newspaper 'as *the* medium that informed citizens extensively, albeit dispassionately and without commentary, of such events and phenomena as the English Revolution, the constitutional reality of the States-General, the parliamentary system in England and the administrative reform of the Venetian Republic'. It remains to be seen 'to what

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<sup>121</sup> Blühm – Engelsing, *Die Zeitung* 41.

<sup>122</sup> Ibidem 41.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem 41 ff.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem 44 f.

<sup>125</sup> Ibidem 74.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem 78 ff.



degree the information conveyed by the periodical press as a precondition for active involvement by the well-to-do middle classes promoted their aspirations to political emancipation'.<sup>127</sup>

#### 10. *Impartiality and the Bourgeois Public Sphere*

The constitutive process of the German bourgeoisie in its struggle with the late incarnation of feudalism, territorial absolutism, must gain in strategic exemplary value where capitalism itself has become a late incarnation, and one facing more thorough challenges than ever before in conflict with the international establishment of socialism. Since there is simply no evidence of a perennial force of enlightenment in the historical process and across national borders, an integrative function for 'enlightenment' must be fashioned on behalf of today's world. Bourgeois historians, sociologists, and not least literary scholars are weaving a 'model' of enlightenment whose cogency can be actualized only by rigidly ignoring historical difference. Since Jürgen Habermas's typologizing efforts have proved particularly persuasive in this context, it is worth subjecting the consistency of his model to a critique from the perspective of media history as pursued in this study.

In his work on the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in 1962, Habermas explains that the organizational form of the bourgeois public sphere as it emerged in the eighteenth century is discernible today only as a breakdown product. Although impossible to restore in real terms, its systematic historical reconstruction is meaningful to the extent that it offers insights into how far its potential present-day form could accommodate claims of rationality and universality. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere was essentially constituted by three elements: the permanent movement of goods and of information and the continual activity of the state.<sup>128</sup> What interests us here is primarily what he has to say about the constitutive power of the movement of information.

Habermas is right to view the permanence and periodicity of the movement of information as determined by the temporality of the early capitalist movement of goods. Also correct is his statement that the printed newspaper developed out of the handwritten newsletters of the commer-

<sup>127</sup> Welke, "Die Geschichte der Zeitung in den ersten Jahrhunderten ihres Bestehens" 101.

<sup>128</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* 16–18 and passim.



cial capitalists and courts,<sup>129</sup> and was therefore based upon information systems observable at least since the late Middle Ages, which also continued to be important – as systems of state secrets – in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries alongside printed newspapers that were accessible to all and thus ‘public’. It is striking, however, that Habermas cannot properly explain the advent of the printed newspaper. He mentions only two reasons for its emergence: the financial interests of those who produced the newspapers and the ‘interest’ of the ‘new (state) authorities’, which allegedly ‘made use of this instrument to promulgate instructions and ordinances’.<sup>130</sup> Strangely enough, he does not address the interest of newspaper consumers at all.

It is doubtless true that financial interests played an important role in the spread of newspapers. After all, in the early days of newspaper publishing, ‘profit margins of 400–500 per cent were not at all unusual’.<sup>131</sup> This does not, however, answer the question of why extensive news stories could now be published, since the great merchants and the courts had long possessed their own information networks whose secrecy they had an interest in preserving for reasons of capitalist competition and politics. The reference to the administrative interests of the authorities is wholly inadequate, for a glance at the newspapers themselves shows us that official ordinances and decrees represented but a fraction of the overall stock of news items. Nowhere does Habermas address the genuine disunity and political and ideological antagonisms within Germany – for example the contrast between absolutist monarchy and the at least rudimentarily parliamentary structures of the big cities, which were also the places of publication of the largest newspapers. The assertion that ‘the information that became public was constituted of residual elements of what was actually available’<sup>132</sup> certainly does not hold up to empirical scrutiny of the newspapers themselves. In strict contrast to this, Blühm, the authority on early German newspaper history, notes that

[r]eporting encompasses all areas of public life and all corners of the known world. The focus is on political events in Europe. Military and diplomatic actions are often described in detail and documented by publishing official statements and eye-witness accounts. Similarly, the newspaper reader is informed of relations between states and the changes they undergo. He can

<sup>129</sup> Ibidem 21.

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>131</sup> Welke, “Die Geschichte der Zeitung in den ersten Jahrhunderten ihres Bestehens” 97.

<sup>132</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* 21.

keep abreast of the election of the Polish king or the sessions of Parliament in London, of courtly festivities and social and confessional struggles and disputes; he hears of tax revolts in France and student unrest in Vienna. Reports from the business world – on markets and fairs, prices and customs duties, maritime trade and manufactures, etc. – are not uncommon, and crime stories frequent [...].<sup>133</sup>

Since Habermas, probably influenced in part by outdated scholarship, has an incorrect image of the early newspapers, he cannot properly assess the newspaper public. Where essential steps in his argumentation cannot hold up to empirical scrutiny, one of his most sensational theses ultimately collapses in on itself: his thesis of the primacy of the 'literary public' over the 'politically functional public' of bourgeois civil society. He claims that

[e]ven before the control over the public sphere by public authority was contested and finally wrested away by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues, there evolved under its cover a public sphere in apolitical form – the literary precursor of the public sphere operative in the political domain. It provided the training ground for a critical public reflection still preoccupied with itself – a process of self-clarification of private people focusing on the genuine experiences of their novel privateness.<sup>134</sup>

In order to bolster this thesis, he explains that the newspaper public must be sought in the 'educated ranks', a public 'which from the outset was a reading public'.<sup>135</sup> He cannot, however – and this is telling – demonstrate from the content of newspapers itself that this public was fixated on literature. For that reason he builds a surrogate construction by asserting that bourgeois critical thinking was sparked not by newspapers and their political and economic information but instead 'by the products of culture that had become publicly accessible: in the reading room and the theater, in museums and at concerts'.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, he even hits upon the idea of invoking the so-called *Sprachgesellschaften* (linguistic societies) of the seventeenth century, which he misconstrues as 'learned *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies)',<sup>137</sup> to vouch for this thesis. One cannot, however, use all of these claims to construct a model that stands up to historical scrutiny. It remains utterly inexplicable why a public fixated on literature was so interested in newspapers whose stock of information could satisfy literary needs marginally, at best.

<sup>133</sup> Blühm, *Zeitung und literarisches Leben* 494 f.

<sup>134</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* 29.

<sup>135</sup> Ibidem 23.

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem 29.

<sup>137</sup> Ibidem 34.

A bourgeois public sphere does not, as Habermas erroneously supposes, constitute itself through initially purely literary or otherwise edifying critical debate, which then becomes political after a sort of aesthetic incubation period. Rather, as the exploration of the partiality question here shows, this critical debate articulated itself politically as well from the beginning. For all those who participated in the process of newspaper formation, the question of partiality was more important than the question of publicness. Or, to put it another way, calls for publicness – at least in Germany – were first articulated in the debate around partiality. After all, impartiality is not the same thing as publicness. The maxim of impartiality is – and the common equation at the time of impartiality with truth distracts our attention from this – a strategic maxim, which initially has no qualitative definition. This maxim is only qualitatively defined by the question of interests. The principle of impartiality is intended to guard against the violation of interests. Since, however, the principle of argumentation and critical discussion was partial from the outset and all early newspaper theorists also expressly recognized it as such, it was also political.

Even today, late-bourgeois ideology sees the condemnation of partiality, a tradition going back to late seventeenth-century debates on the politics of information, as the guarantee of mediation between societal contradictions that transcends classes and systems. The breadth of the arc of tradition is determined by the strength of the bourgeois class, the continuity of the relations of production it has created and the continuity of capitalism. If, beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, the maxim of impartiality made possible an apparent synthesis between feudal absolutist and bourgeois interests, the illusory and hypocritical nature of this synthesis became evident at the latest with the overcoming of German feudal absolutism, which as we know was accomplished not by revolution but by a protracted process that took two centuries. The doctrine of impartiality itself presupposed genuine partiality. But the German bourgeoisie needed the maxim of impartiality; it needed the ideologically synthetic power of this demand in order to develop its partisan interests in the bosom of feudalism, then alongside absolutism, and ultimately and increasingly emphatically in opposition to it. In order to realize its class interests, the bourgeoisie needed the appearance of the equal participation of all members of society in the movement of information and goods and later also in political power. Since the demise of absolutism it by no means needs this appearance less than before, because in emancipating itself it also necessarily produced the real contradiction that signals and seals its own decline.

II. *Partiality:**Ten Theses on Its Conditions of Emergence, Criteria, and Scope*<sup>138</sup>

More than thirty years have passed since the publication of my essay on the problem of 'partiality' in early modern newspapers.<sup>139</sup>

The essay attracted attention when it was published, but the intervening years have seen no deeper exploration, let alone explanation, of the emergence of the partiality question as a media-dependent problem of information technology.<sup>140</sup> At the time, I consulted those authors involved in the German newspaper debate of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – that is Fritsch, Hartmann, Hartnack, Ludwig, Marperger, Stieler, Weise et al. – in order to define the dimensions of the newspaper-specific phenomenon of partiality. As sophisticated, penetrating, and comprehensive as it was, I now believe that these authors' awareness of the problem does not suffice to identify the origins and media-technical dimensions of the partiality problem clearly. For that reason, I would like to tackle the problem again, offering an argument in ten theses.

1. *The terms partiality and impartiality predate the medium of the newspaper.*

What does this mean?

The terminology of partiality is rooted in the sphere of law. (At least) since classical antiquity, jurisprudence has distinguished between legal parties, whose disagreement can only be decided, for the purposes of punishment or arbitration, by an impartial judge. A prejudiced, biased judge judges partially (*partialis*),<sup>141</sup> while an unbiased, neutral judge judges impartially (*aequabilis*, equitably). *Partialitas* is the sin of the judges.

The military also put its stamp on the terminology of partiality. We have long spoken of warring parties. Those who remain impartial in war

<sup>138</sup> First published in German under the title "Nochmals zur Partheylichkeit. Entstehungsbedingungen, Kriterien, Geltungsbereich", in Blome A. – Böning H. (eds.), *Presse und Geschichte. Leistungen und Perspektiven der historischen Presseforschung* (Bremen: 2008) 67–75; reprinted in Berns, *Die Jagd auf die Nymphe Echo* 37–45.

<sup>139</sup> See Part I of this text.

<sup>140</sup> This is true of F. Adrian's dissertation *Journalismus im 30jährigen Krieg. Kommentierung und 'Partheylichkeit' in Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, *Journalismus und Geschichte* 2 (Konstanz: 1999) and the scholarly literature cited there.

<sup>141</sup> See the articles "Partheyisch" and "Partheylichkeit" in Zedler Johann Heinrich (ed.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* (Leipzig – Halle: 1740) vol. XXVI, col. 1057.

remain neutral. It was in this sense that the Saxon jurist Johann Wilhelm Neumayr von Ramsla defined the notion of impartiality in his 1620 treatise on the law of war, *Von der NEUTRALITET Vnd ASSISTENTZ Oder Unpartheyligkeit in KriegsZeiten* (*Of neutrality and assistance or impartiality in times of war*).<sup>142</sup>

Finally, the terminology of partiality also played a role in early modern religious politics. From the sixteenth century, the confessions were referred to as parties. And as a consequence, the term party is mentioned in the imperial constitution for the first time in 1648. In the *Instrumentum pacis Osnabrugense*, the manifesto of the Peace of Westphalia, Article 5, § 52 recognizes the right of 'itio in partes', the right to join Christian confessions as 'religious parties' (*Glaubensparteien*).<sup>143</sup>

To recapitulate, the concepts of party and partiality (and consequently also of impartiality) have three important dimensions of meaning in the early modern period: judicial, military and religious, and are thus related to three other concepts: judicial impartiality to 'equitability' (*aequalitas*), military impartiality to 'neutrality', and religious impartiality to 'tolerance'.

2. *We first encounter the term impartiality in newspaper titles in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.*<sup>144</sup> *It thus acquired a new scope.*

What does this mean?

<sup>142</sup> Neumayr von Ramsla Johann Wilhelm, *Von der NEUTRALITET Und ASSISTENTZ Oder Unpartheyligkeit in KriegsZeiten sonderbarer TRACTAT oder Handlung* (Erfurt, Philipp Wittel – Johann Birckner: 1620).

<sup>143</sup> Von Beyme K., "Partei, Faktion", in Brunner O. – Conze W. – Koselleck R. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: 1978), vol. IV, 677–735, here 685 f.

<sup>144</sup> In 1623 a weekly newspaper probably produced in Zurich appeared under the title *Neue Unpartheysche Zeitung vnd Relation / Auß den glaubwürdigsten Sendbriefen aller Orthen / Stätt unnd Ländern zusamen getragen / dis 1623. Jahrs. Gerichtet auff den alten Calender*. See Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 55. The title was virtually identical in 1632; *ibidem*. Further examples of assertions of impartiality in newspaper titles include an annual titlepage for 1660: *Zusammen-getragene unpartheyliche NOUVELLES* (Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 172), and the annual title page for *Mercurius auffß 1671. Jahr: 'Alles auß vnpartheyischen überschickten Glaubwürdigen Missiven vnd Schrifften extrahirt'* (Bogel – Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 193). See also Böning H. – Moepps E., *Hamburg. Kommentierte Bibliographie der Zeitungen, Zeitschriften, Intelligenzblätter, Kalender und Almanache sowie biographische Hinweise zu Herausgebern, Verlegern und Druckern periodischer Schriften. Von den Anfängen bis 1765*, Deutsche Presse, vol. I (Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt: 1996) no. 25: 'Unparteyischer Anweiser (1659)'.

First of all, it means that the term impartiality was not used in non-periodical publications and news media that appeared at wider intervals. That is, it appeared neither in broadsheets, single-sheet newspapers (*Neue Zeitungen*) and leaflets nor in calendars, trade fair reports, or monthly magazines.

This also means that through integration into newspaper titles impartiality gained a new dimension in distinction to the judicial, military and religious valences: one, namely, that encompassed the commonality among all three valences. The moment when the word impartiality first appeared in newspaper headings was eminently significant for the history of the term's meaning. It became public, and was publicly posited as a problem, demarcating the sphere in which the reader could develop as a reflecting, reasoning subject.

The term impartiality evolved into a formulaic assertion made by newsmen, serving the prophylactic self-exoneration of those who collected, selected, and edited the news. The term sometimes mutated into one of pure self-defence, which was intended to render a certain newsman immune to recourse claims. The point was to absolve the newsman of liability for the truth and consequences of the accounts he compiled and published.

At the same time, however, the term implied an appeal to the self-empowerment of potential readers, who were accustomed to partisan news. The need to assert impartiality reveals the everyday predominance of partiality.

3. *By virtue of the temporal and logistical conditions of its appearance, the newspaper itself gave rise to the partiality problem.*

What does this mean?

The four constituents of the newspaper – periodicity, currency, universality, and market-mediated publicity – together made the partiality problem inevitable for newspapers. The temporal conditions of currency and periodicity were especially important, however. For in order to live up to the demand that newspapers be current, the newsman had to publish reports whose accuracy he had no opportunity to check personally. Both successive and simultaneous self-correction were possible, however.

The periodical appearance of newspapers gave newsmen the chance to correct the accuracy of a news item on a particular topic via subsequent reports on the same topic. Thus in 1664 Georg Greflinger's weekly *Nordischer Mercurius* noted 'For the rest, one Post corrects the other' ('Im

übrigen corrigirt eine Post die andere').<sup>145</sup> According to this view, the impartiality of a newspaper consisted in the possibility of perpetual self-correction by constantly printing new information on the same items. The finding that assurances of impartiality appear with particular frequency on the annual titlepages of newspapers, which in the seventeenth century were often bound together in one volume, substantiates this.<sup>146</sup>

Another means of self-correction consisted of publishing a multiplicity of viewpoints, that is, the simultaneous juxtaposition of diverging accounts of the same news item from different informants. The more sources reported on the same topic, the more likely one naturally was to arrive at a likely picture of events.

In general, we can say that the time pressures facing newsmen compelled them to publish partial accounts. Yet the possibility of successive and simultaneous correction was available not just to newspaper producers but above all also to readers, and the newspapers repeatedly called upon them to make use of it.

4. *Three options for absolving themselves of accusations of partiality were available to newsmen: a) the maxim relata refero, b) the maxim of non-commentary, c) the acceptance of preventive censorship. All three possibilities helped to constitute the peculiar 'subjectlessness' of the early newspaper.*

What does this mean?

- The maxim *relata refero* (literally 'I relate what has been told') consists of printing reports just as they were received. This was the most common procedure newsmen adopted in the pursuit of impartiality. (To be sure, this also lends the newspaper a motley quality that casts doubt on its historiographical dignity.)
- In pursuing the principle of non-commentary, the newsmen took account of the fact that, given both the currency and the contradictory nature of reports, the trends in their development eluded objective assessment.
- The acceptance of preventive censorship by the authorities was most effective in absolving newsmen of accusations of partiality, since they had to submit to the interests of the censorship body.

<sup>145</sup> Böning – Moepps, *Hamburg* col. 23.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. the quotation in n. 144.



The pursuit of all three principles meant that the newspaper producer himself was not visible as a moral, political, or intellectual subject. As I have noted elsewhere, the early modern newspaper was 'subjectless'.

5. *The newsman's subjectlessness and impartiality do not imply that the newspaper he produces is itself impartial.*

What does this mean?

The early modern newspaper has two perspectives on partiality: One is that of the authorities as a censorship entity<sup>147</sup> which licences the newspaper; the other is that of the individual informants, as reflected in each individual account. The newsman mediates between these two perspectives on partiality, the general one of the censorship authority and the partial one of the various informants.

6. *The newsman's impartiality consists of balancing the partiality of the authorities with the partiality of informants.*

What does this mean?

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<sup>147</sup> From the sixteenth century, censorship authority was shared by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, the pope and the emperor. The central censorship authorities were the papal Congregation of the Index in Rome and the Imperial Book Commission in Frankfurt am Main, which was located there because Frankfurt was also the site of the largest book fair in the world. The right of censorship was delegated to territorial and local authorities who employed their own censorship officials. To increase the efficacy of surveillance, publishing was permitted only in three types of communes, as stipulated in the new imperial police ordinances of 1577 (*Reichs-Policey-Ordnung*, Titul XXXV, § 6), which remained in force until the end of the Holy Roman Empire (1806): 'Thus we order and decree once again / that in the entire Roman Empire Printing Houses are permitted in no other Places / than in the Cities / where Electors and Princes habitually hold court / or where there are Universities / or in considerable Imperial Cities / but otherwise all clandestine Printing Shops are to be immediately abolished: Similarly no book printer shall be approved / who has not first been recognized by the authorities/ where he is domiciled/ as honest/ honourable/ and suitable in all respects / and also has sworn a special corporal oath there [...].': ('So ordnen und setzen wir nachmahls / daß im gantzen Römischen Reich die Buchdruckereyen an keinen andern Oertern / dann in den Städten / da Churfürsten und Fürsten ihre gewöhnliche Hofhaltungen haben / oder da Universitates sind / oder in ansehnlichen Reichs-Städten verstattet / aber sonsten alle Winckel-Druckereyen gestricks abgeschafft werden sollen: Desgleichen soll auch kein Buchdrucker zugelassen werden / der nicht zuporderst von seiner Obrigkeit / darunter er häufiglich sitzt / darzu redlich / erbar / und allerdings tauglich erkennt / auch daselbst mit sonderlichem leiblichen Eyd beladen ist [...].') Cf. "Römischer Käyserlicher Majestät/ und des Reichs-Ständen Policey-Ordnung/ zu Franckfurt 1577. Gebessert", in Lünig Johann Christian (ed.), *Das teutsche Reichs-Archiv, und zwar pars generalis nebst dessen Continuation* [...] (Leipzig, Friedrich Lanckisch: 1713) 412–432, here 430.



As we know from Kaspar Stieler, the newsman could only print one quarter of the reports he received.<sup>148</sup> In selecting and arranging the ensemble of news for publication he had to take into account five criteria: the interest of the authorities, the interest of the general public, the viability or promising quality of certain news items, plausibility, and finally entertainment value. The newsman had to apply this diversity of criteria in order to attract the interest of a wide variety of buyers. The diffusion of the criteria therefore corresponded to the diffusion of customer interests. Even the licensing and censoring authorities could have no interest in their local newspaper being monoperspectival, since they would otherwise be deprived of many significant facts (newspapers 'do not blush', as Stieler noted; they 'must not be hampered', as Frederick II of Prussia stated.)

7. *The maxim of impartiality corresponds to the newsman's aspiration to communicate historia.*

What does this mean?

The early modern newspaper regarded itself as a mode of historical writing. Accordingly, newspaper theory is part of the theory of history. Early modern historiography follows the axiom that equates earliness in history to proximity to origins, God, and truth. According to this view, older sources, especially eyewitness accounts, are by their very nature more trustworthy than later ones. The shorter the chain of witnesses, the more plausible the information conveyed. To that extent a daily paper must necessarily be truer and more authentic than a monthly paper, let alone a twice-yearly periodical such as the trade fair reports or an annual one such as a calendar. The length of the chain of witnesses necessary to overcome the temporal distance to an event produces a vagueness that was considered either an intended or tolerated falsification or fictionalization of history. As Agrippa of Nettesheim noted in 1530, the accepted falsification occurs when historians 'are compelled to compile their writings from the relations of others [...] and thus can write nothing certain and abiding'.<sup>149</sup> In contrast to this one could cite Daniel Hartnack, whose

<sup>148</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 48.

<sup>149</sup> Agrippa von Nettesheim Heinrich Cornelius, *Die Eitelkeit und Unsicherheit der Wissenschaften und die Verteidigungsschrift*, ed. F. Mauthner [German transl. of *De incertitudine et vanitate et artium et de excellentia Verbi Dei* (Antwerp, Joannes Grapheus: 1530)] (Wiesbaden: 1969) 43 f.

1688 *Erachten von Einrichtung der [...] Historien* describes the relationship between newspapers and retrospective historical accounts as a process of chemical distillation.<sup>150</sup> According to this view, history that maintains a distance from the historical events becomes purer because it is more refined than a current newspaper account. Historiography perfects itself through acts of distillation. The newspaper nevertheless also has value for long-range historiography as an undistilled source.

8. *Only impartiality ensures that the newspaper can function and be sacralized as a medium of world history.*

What does this mean?

The newspaper is sacrosanct as a permanently pulsing source of history.<sup>151</sup> Thus the end of the 1623 annual titlepage for the Zurich (?) weekly newspaper *Wochentliche RELATION* reads ‘...printed and published to inform and edify the reader eager for history’ (dem Histori begirigen Leser zur nachricht vnd erbawung [!] / abgetruckt / vnd an tag geben.) This is followed by the rhyming motto ‘Z’ erforschen z’erst Gotts Wunderwerck / Auff das / was täglich g’schicht / wolmerck’ (To first explore God’s wondrous Works / for that /which happens every Day / mark well).<sup>152</sup> Daniel Hartnack’s declaration of 1688 reads like a clarification of what is meant by God’s wondrous works: ‘the News opens up the Book of the whole World’, (‘die Novellen sind eine Eröffnung des Buchs der gantzen Welt’),<sup>153</sup> that is, the *liber mundi*. According to the theological two-books doctrine – with the *liber mundi* on one side, the Bible on the other – prevalent since the twelfth century, the *liber mundi* is one of the two books in which God manifests himself.<sup>154</sup> Kaspar Stieler also wrote in 1695 that God is a writer of news and newspapers, and he goes so far in his sacralization of the newspaper as to celebrate it as a product and continuation of the gospels and therefore a medium of divine

<sup>150</sup> Hartnack, *Erachten* 60.

<sup>151</sup> On this problem more generally, see Bernis J.J., “Zeitung und Historia. Die historiographischen Konzepte der Zeitungstheoretiker des 17. Jahrhunderts”, *Daphnis* 12 (1983) 87–110.

<sup>152</sup> Bogel – Blümm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* vol. II, 54.

<sup>153</sup> Hartnack, *Erachten* 100.

<sup>154</sup> On the two-books doctrine, see Philipp W., *Das Werden der Aufklärung aus theologisch-geschichtlicher Sicht* (Göttingen: 1957) passim; as well as Curtius E.R., *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berne – Munich: 1963) 323 ff.

self-revelation.<sup>155</sup> As a pulsating, ever-current medium of world history in progress, in which God expresses himself, the newspaper is closest to the divine history-maker and helmsman. This is where the maxim of impartiality draws its theological legitimation: any unauthorized intervention in the flow of news would be sacrilege. Partisan individual news items shaped by standpoint are deemed mere momentary and partial slowdowns, to be resolved in the self-regulating streams of divine self-revelation, which in any case authorize neither the newsman nor even the prince to make regulatory interventions. In this sense, Stieler declares that the prince as God's trustee should not only not impede the free flow of information, but should safeguard it: 'From this emerges / what noble Work the Newspapers perform/ and how necessary they are/ that they should be maintained as a Shrine/ and their Freedom not curtailed.'<sup>156</sup>

For Stieler, the *liber mundi* and the gospels appear to be virtually conflated. Compare such sacralizations of the newspaper, which we can observe throughout the seventeenth century, to Leibniz's defence of the historical novel: in a 1713 letter to Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick, who famously spent his life writing endless novels, Leibniz speaks of God as a novelist who conceives of and emits world history as a 'novel of these times': 'nobody emulates our Lord better than the Inventor of a splendid Novel'.<sup>157</sup>

We need to keep in mind that at this time history always, and in all its incarnations, still had to be theologically justified and Biblically certified.<sup>158</sup> The sequence of newspapers – which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were frequently bound together in annual volumes – form a fascinating continuum, akin to the continuous process of writing and reading upon which Anton Ulrich's many-thousand-page novels rely. Both newspaper and novel, however, owe their kinship to the reference to the divine process of *historia*. Where the progress of newspapers draws its tension from the accumulation of supplementary or contradictory news items, the historical novel acquires it through an intricate narrative. Both

<sup>155</sup> Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 19 f.

<sup>156</sup> 'Hieraus erscheinet / was vor ein edles Werk die Zeitungen / und wie notwendig sie seyn / daß darüber als ein Heiligtum zu halten / das deren freyer Lauf nicht unterbrochen werde.' Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* 20.

<sup>157</sup> Mazingue E., *Anton Ulrich, Duc de Braunschweig-Wolfenbuettel (1633–1714), un Prince Romancier au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Lille: 1974) 394.

<sup>158</sup> See Klempt A., *Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung. Zum Wandel des Geschichtsdenkens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: 1960).

depend on forward-thinking, deduction-happy readers, indeed they virtually produce and nurture them.

The manner in which the newspaper appeared meant that it could even become a medium of transmission for the novel. Thus the first serialized novel in German appeared in the *Nordischer Mercurius* in 1668. *Die Entdeckung der Insel Pines* was published there in three instalments.<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile, a magazine dedicated to moral instruction and entertainment, Johann Frisch's *Erbauliche Ruhstunden* (*Edifying leisure hours*), which appeared in Hamburg, invoked the novel form as a model of entertainment:

For in this Case as well one seeks to emulate Novels / and where possible to introduce the Beginning or Origin of the Matter in the Middle, alongside its Resolution / so that the Reader may be kept always desirous of reading further/ and thereby also obliged to look back frequently and consult / what he has already perceived / rendering him all the better acquainted with it.<sup>160</sup>

9. *The newspaper consumer is an eclectic reader. The precondition for this eclectic access is the variegated thematic scope.*

What does this mean?

The early newspaper is a monument to miscellany. In his eclectic access to the motley news offerings, the reader realizes his own interests. He nourishes his own partiality, but subjects it to constant correction. The motley nature of the early newspaper was a result of the lack of fixed rubrics, and the market-strategic need to constantly meet the interests of a diffuse audience, while the number of available pages remained the same from week to week.

The tradition of the mixed literary genre of the *poikilia*, or miscellany,<sup>161</sup> which goes back to the late antique *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius (2nd

<sup>159</sup> Böning – Moepps, *Hamburg* col. 21. Translator's note: This is a German translation/adaptation of Henry Neville's 1668 epistolary shipwreck novel *The Isle of Pines*.

<sup>160</sup> '[W]eil man auch in diesem Fall denen Romainen nacharten/ und den Anfang oder Ursprung der Sache neben dem Erfolg ins Mittel mit Gelegenheit einführen wil/ damit der Leser in beharrlicher Lust immer weiter zu lesen erhalten/ dabey auch obligiret werde offtermahls wieder zurück und nachzuschlagen/ was er schon vernommen/ und ihm also alles desto besser bekant machen möge.' Böning – Moepps, *Hamburg* col. 65; see also cols. 67–68.

<sup>161</sup> On the significance of miscellany in the early modern period, see Kühlmann W., "Polyhistorie jenseits der Systeme. Zur funktionellen Pragmatik und publizistischen Typologie frühneuzeitlicher Buntschriftstellerei", in Müller J.-D. – Schierbaum M. (eds.), *Enzyklopädistik zwischen 1550 und 1650* (Münster: 2008). I would like to thank the author for kindly giving me access to the typescript.

century A.D.),<sup>162</sup> gained vigorous new impetus from the advent of the newspaper. In retrospect, the gigantic and diffuse body of news published in the periodical newspapers was sorted by themes and interest groups: in the fat anthologies tales of murder joined tales of murder, heroic anecdotes joined heroic anecdotes, love stories joined love stories, recipes joined recipes, miracle stories joined miracles stories, riddles joined riddles, and so forth. Even novelists dipped into this reservoir. The miscellaneous nature of the impartial, uncommented newspaper facilitated and guaranteed the vitality of such subsequent works, which pursued quite a different logic of interests.

10. *The criteria of partiality / impartiality that applied at the inception and in the early phase of the periodical newspaper changed over a long, drawn out process.*

What does that mean?

Nowadays, when we say that a newspaper is partial or impartial, it means something different from what it did four hundred years ago. The old form of partiality that I have presented in ideal-typical form in the preceding nine theses changed over a protracted process, one that was locally and regionally quite uneven.

The partiality of informers disappeared with the professionalization of information acquisition, that is, with the stabilization and capitalization of news production. Increasingly, informants were no longer chance sources, but rather were paid on a continuing basis to supply information that had to fit the newspaper producer's frame of interest. They evolved into editors.

The partiality of the authorities disappeared to the degree that they lost their monarchical character. Where a newspaper had to satisfy oligarchical or democratic interests, for example, censorship became less tight. With the emergence of a system of political parties, the latter fought for the right to their own press. This lent a whole new dimension to the concept of partiality. And if party newspapers (in the strict sense of the word) no longer exist nowadays, this does not mean there is no place anymore for partiality. Given the wide range of media available to those seeking information, however, it is even more diffuse today than it was four hundred years ago.

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<sup>162</sup> Gellius Aulus, *The Attic Nights*, ed. John C. Rolfe, 3 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA – London: <sup>8</sup>2002, <sup>6</sup>1998, <sup>7</sup>1999).

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## EXPORTING IMPARTIALITY\*

Joad Raymond

My theme is the role of impartiality – and some related words and concepts like truth, matters of fact, intelligence – in news discourse in seventeenth-century Britain. During the course of the seventeenth century a broad and dynamic culture of printed and manuscript news developed: news became fundamental to the printing and bookselling industry, and came to play a role in politics. This culture of news – a *News Imaginary* we might label it – expressed itself in many ways, affecting the sense of belonging to the island, the sense of time and temporality, the sense of connectedness to Europe, the sense of fellow-feeling among protestants, the sense of the power of the written word, to name but a few. It also – and quite profoundly – affected notions of what was true, of how one knew news to be reliable or authentic. ‘Journalism was’, as Brendan Dooley writes, ‘the soft underbelly of early modern truth’.<sup>1</sup> As was the case with so many news-related phenomena, the veracity of news was double-facing, containing two contradictory elements. Hence in 1632 Donald Lupton could write: ‘every one can say, its even as true as a Currantoe, meaning that it’s all false’ – the corrantoe, the serial foreign-news periodical of the time, was proverbial for falsehood.<sup>2</sup> Conversely – and interdependently – the diligent comparing of news sources, and the anticipation of confirmation through the arrival of future reports, became the model for diligent, cautious interpretation.<sup>3</sup> The news carried profound connotations for historiography, and for notions of judgement and impartiality more generally.

Yet British notions of impartiality – which would be widely exported in the days of Enlightenment and Empire – were not home grown, and could not be confined within the parameters of the indigenous culture of

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\* Thanks to Simon Schaffer for his indefatigable intelligence and his help with this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Dooley B., *The Social History of Scepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore: 1999) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Lupton Donald, *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartred into Severall Characters* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1632) 142.

<sup>3</sup> Dooley, *Social History of Scepticism*; though this history has a different form in Italy, owing to the unique relationship between *avvisi* and print that obtained there.

news. British news was situated within a pan-European network of news communication; it was perhaps only an outcrop in which the outer limits of that network were materialised. This network was highly connected, mobile, and dependent on linguistic and cultural translation. News travelled along pathways, passed between various agents, and was transmuted into various forms. Impartiality had to survive the rigours of geography as well as time. My subsidiary theme, then, is how notions of impartiality were deployed within a pan-European network of communications that is divided by language, political allegiance, and confessional antipathy.

### 1. *Impartial Rushworth and the Fortunes of Documents*

The experiences of John Rushworth, who had directly and personally meddled with the mess of news and history, are illuminating here, and provide a means of approaching the conceptual vocabulary. During the civil wars and republic of the 1640s and 1650s, Rushworth had worked as a clerk-assistant to parliament, licenser to the press, secretary to Sir Thomas Fairfax, as a messenger and as an intelligencer. In 1641 he began to collect the new newsbooks that were appearing on London bookstalls, printed on London presses, describing the proceedings in parliament (where he was already working as clerk-assistant).<sup>4</sup> He amassed a formidable collection of books and pamphlets, and his appointment as licenser to the press in 1644–1647 with particular responsibility for pamphlets and newsbooks indicates the trust parliament placed in him as someone who understood the workings of the book trade. During the late 1650s, while practicing the law and holding a number of offices, he began to compile a history of the civil war that was based on his own experiences and the various documents in his collection.

When he began to publish his *Historical Collections* (published in four parts in 1659, 1680, 1692 and 1701; the last two parts posthumously), Rushworth emphasised in his prefaces (and elsewhere) that he was a

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<sup>4</sup> The collection is held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford at shelfmark Arch. H. e. 108. I use the term 'newsbook', following the most common usage by admittedly sometimes inconsistent contemporaries, to refer to the quarto news publications of the 1640s; prior to 1641 the irregular serial publications of foreign news were generally referred to as corantos. My terminology is perhaps excessively clear-cut, but it is based on contemporary usage and has the benefit of clarity.

participant in and eye-witness to many of the events he described.<sup>5</sup> In fact his *Historical Collections* might have been the earliest of numerous histories of the civil wars written as memoirs or secret diaries, or as testy magisterial narratives in which the first person is more or less audible.<sup>6</sup> Yet the method of the *Historical Collections* is unexpected and surprisingly unconventional: it was a documentary history, eschewing judgement, and with the minimum of visible editorial input. Rushworth outlined his 'impartial method' in the 1659 Preface: he would reproduce documents and offer statements only of 'a bare Narrative of matter of Fact, digested in order of time'.<sup>7</sup> The reader would be required actively to construct his or her own interpretation. In a letter of 1687 he claimed to have been original in this: 'I gave y<sup>e</sup> first President of my method in writing & declaring onely matter of fact in Order of time without observation or Reflection'.<sup>8</sup> His impartial method meant avoiding personal judgement, even of those things in

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<sup>5</sup> Rushworth also published *The Tryal of Thomas Earl of Strafford*, and in a letter to Anthony Wood he distinguished this from *Historical Collections*. In the same letter he emphasised that the former was entirely reconstructed out of his own shorthand transcriptions of debates. Letter from John Rushworth to Anthony Wood dated 21 July 1687, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Wood F.39 f.382. In his dedication to the Earl of Halifax in the Strafford volume, Rushworth wrote: 'I should not have dared to present this Work to your Lordship, so nearly related to this eminent Minister of State, if I had not been a Witnesse to all the steps of the proceedings in this great Action, and if I had not taken in Characters, as well and truly, all that was said for him, as what his Accusers said against him; and therefore I can with great assurance aver it to be a candid Representation of Matter of Fact, which is all I pretend to publish to the World'. See Rushworth John, *The Tryal of Thomas Earl of Strafford [...] Faithfully Collected, and Impartially Published, Without Observation or Reflection [...]* (London, printed for John Wright and Richard Chiswell: 1680). See also Raymond J., "Rushworth [Rushforth], John (c.1612–1690)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24288>, accessed 17 Feb 2013].

<sup>6</sup> MacGillivray R., *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague: 1974); Patterson A., "Marvell and Secret History", in Cherniak W. – Dzelzainis M. (eds.), *Marvell and Liberty* (Basingstoke: 1999) 23–49.

<sup>7</sup> Rushworth John, *Historical collections of private passages of state [...] Beginning the sixteenth year of King James, anno 1618. And ending the fifth year of King Charls, anno 1629.* (London, Thomas Newcomb for George Thomason: 1659) fol. b<sup>v</sup>. Or: 'he seldom speaks in his own person' as the author of the Preface wrote in Rushworth John, *Historical Collections. The third part; in two volumes. [...] from the meeting of the Parliament, November the 3d. 1640 to the end of the year 1644 [...]* (London, printed for Richard Chiswell and Thomas Cockerill: 1692). The first part of the *Historical Collections* was published in 1659; *Historical Collections. The second part* (London, printed for John Wright and Richard Chiswell: 1680) in two volumes in 1680; the third part in two volumes in 1692; and finally *Historical Collections the fourth and last part* (London, printed for Richard Chiswell and Thomas Cockerill: 1701).

<sup>8</sup> Rushworth to Wood, MS Wood F.39 fol. 383.

which he was directly involved, in favour of the documents (many public) that events left behind.

The conflicts that underlay, and were articulated in, the civil wars were still resonating through later-seventeenth century Britain (indeed they endured much longer than that). Hence it was inevitable that a parliamentarian sympathiser, and moreover one who had been implicated in the parliamentarian war effort in the 1640s, would face a querulous readership. Moreover his decision to take his narrative back into the reign of James, beginning with a comet as a presage of disaster, aggravated those who were already likely to be poorly-disposed towards him: it implied that a measure of responsibility lay in the Stuart monarchy, as opposed, say, to a plotting parliamentary leadership in the 1630s. In general, parliamentarians emphasised longer-term causes than royalists. His chronological breadth also gave Rushworth the opportunity to document the misdeeds of Star Chamber (the Westminster court that became in the 1630s a symbol of the abuse of royal prerogative and ecclesiastical authority; it was abolished by parliament in 1641), and associate them with Stuart autocratic tendencies. Accusations of partisanship and partiality were unavoidable. The very ferocity of these accusations is revealing, however, as is the language in which they were couched.

Rushworth's sharpest critic was John Nalson, a Tory high-church Anglican, who published *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State*, in 1682. The 'impartial' here, which responds to Rushworth's own language, makes Nalson's accusation plain: Rushworth and his method were self-evidently partial. In return Nalson offered a highly coloured narrative of the 'Wicked Designs' of an 'Antimonarchical and Schismaticall Faction'. In opposition to Rushworth's documentary method, which leaves the reader 'groping in the dark and unpleasant Night of Conjectures', Nalson interprets and glosses an already-tendentious narrative with polemical interpolations: 'I shall attempt no other Justification of them than their conformity to Truth, from which if any of them be found to straggle or deviate, my own hand shall be ready to throw the first stone at such Adulations of Truth and History'.<sup>9</sup>

Some of Nalson's criticisms are insightful. Rushworth is selective in his choice of documents. His omissions can appear to be tendentious.

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<sup>9</sup> Nalson John, *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State, From the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion In the Year MDCXXXIX. To the Murther of King Charles I*, 2 vols. (London, Printed for S. Mearne, T. Dring, B. Tooke, T. Sawbridge, and C. Mearne: 1682) vol. I, ii. He does print some additional documents.

As Kevin Sharpe writes, Rushworth's 'seemingly innocent' presentation of uninterpreted sources, particularly those concerning Star Chamber trials in the 1630s, in fact furnished a contentious narrative.<sup>10</sup> There is undoubtedly some ideological work being done in Rushworth's selections, and his 'method' facilitates and legitimises his selectivity (which is not to suggest that it is employed for that purpose; just that documentary realism tends towards supporting Rushworth's analysis). However, in the context of seventeenth-century histories of the civil war, Rushworth's mode of analysis, and the voice that occasionally punctuates it, seems reserved, reasoned, sedulously neutral. What then is the basis for Nalson's claim to supplement and supplant Rushworth's *Historical Collections* with *An Impartial Collection*?

There are two clear and distinct explanations of Nalson's language. First, that he is aware that his collection is partial, and his deployment of the notion of impartiality is purely rhetorical, devious or even hypocritical; or, more sympathetically, that the adjective is little more than a disingenuous *captatio benevolentiae*, without conceptual content. This is more or less the position adopted by Barbara Shapiro, in her study of England as *A Culture of Fact*, when discussing similar disparities among other historians.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the conflict between Nalson and Rushworth could suggest an understanding of impartial judgement quite different from ours. The difference inheres most significantly in the role of *providence*.

Nalson discovers in the history he is telling a clear narrative pattern: a design or plot by hypocritical and schismatical puritans to reduce 'Monarchy to an Impotent *Venetian* Seigniory, and utterly to Extirpate the most Apostolical Government of Episcopacy, and set up the Anarchy of Toleration or Liberty of Conscience in Church'.<sup>12</sup> This plot was eventually thwarted and the rightful king happily restored to the throne, all determined by God, which events revealed His secret intentions. This makes it, of course, perfectly rational to say that history does not lie in the documents: history inheres in the patterns concealed within and beyond documents. Hence the true historian has to identify hidden patterns, and to do so is not to be guilty of partiality. It may seem partial but it is not, because it involves uncovering a hidden pattern, a pattern that is actually there.

<sup>10</sup> Sharpe K., *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (London: 1992) 666, 670.

<sup>11</sup> Shapiro B., *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, NY: 2000) 56-58.

<sup>12</sup> Nalson, *Impartial Collection* vol. I, iii.

There is a comparison to be drawn, though it may seem astringent, between this hermeneutic, and those who thought that they were wielding the sword of God during the civil wars. Among the latter was Thomas Waring, who stated his position with remarkable clarity, warning Cromwellian soldiers in Ireland that God would punish them if they conducted themselves with 'luke-warmnesse'. He continues: 'let them into whose hands God hath put the sword of his wrath, take heed lest they use it either coldly, *partially* or negligently; let God smite them, and raise up others to execute his just vengeance'.<sup>13</sup> To be impartial one would need to exact revenge; to use the sword partially would be not to perform God's intentions upon the Irish. There is a whiff of vengefulness too in Nalson's writing, but there is an internal logic to his claim of impartiality: not only that he thinks that God is on his side, but also the truth has to be actively found in God's interventions, and not allowed to stand as the passive significance of a series of documents.

This must raise the question: why is impartiality even an issue? What is the governing condition under which such a hermeneutic of im-/partiality could arise? One answer we have implicitly touched upon: news culture and its attendant pluralities. It followed the multiplicity of sources, which was consequent upon both political factionalism and the excessive print culture in seventeenth century Britain. Conflict and excess leads to scepticism and impartiality.

After Rushworth's death the publication of his *Collections* continued, and in 1692 the third part appeared. Three years after the Glorious Revolution had brought a Dutch Protestant king to Britain, the ideological atmosphere was more sympathetic to Rushworth's parliamentary constitutionalism, and the *Collections* appeared with a fulsome anonymous preface that retorted to Tory vitriol:

IT is observed by a very Learned Historian of this Age, That it is a hard matter to write a good History; because, if the Author be an Eye-witness, he is apt to lean to a Party; if not, he can hardly attain a true knowledge of Affairs. The latter of these Difficulties Mr. *RUSHWORTH*, the Author of these *HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS*, could not possibly labour under, since he was not only present when these things were transacted, but had all opportunities of gaining due Information, and made it the chief business of his Life to gain it. Nor was it possible for him to take a better course then he has done, to avoid all suspicion of Partiality: For he seldom speaks in his own person, because

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<sup>13</sup> Waring Thomas, *A Brief Narration of the Plotting* (London, B. Alsop – T. Dunster: 1650) 63; my emphasis.

he would not have the Truth of his History to depend upon his own Credit. The Proceedings in Parliament, he has from the Journals of both Houses. The Reasons of both Sides for betaking themselves to Arms, and their several Justifications, are delivered in their own Words, expressed in their *Declarations, Remonstrances, Petitions, Addresses*, and their *Answers* [...]. Those two Difficulties therefore of Ignorance and Partiality, being here surmounted, the former by God's Providence, and the Author's Industry, and the latter by his Integrity, which appears in his Method of writing, with which Partiality is inconsistent; the benefit of these *COLLECTIONS* to Posterity is not only the same with that of all True History, but is such as must needs yield us more useful Observations than any other History can do; since the Subject-matter of them so nearly concerns us [...].<sup>14</sup>

Rushworth was methodologically canny. By deploying documents as the fount of truth he was in fact arguing that the history of the causes of the war and of its progress inhered in parliamentary proceedings and speeches, in trials and in the public exchange of documents between king and parliament. History was thus comprised in documents, many printed; not in cabinet counsels and the secret history that took place occluded from common sight. Other historians of the civil war suggested that true history was privileged, lying in private discussions and in the *arcana imperii*. The cachet of a volume like Sir Philip Warwick's *Memoirs* (1701) was precisely that through revealing the personal experiences of a courtier at the centre of events the true history of the wars was discovered. Like common news, public history was unreliable. Many social commentators – in Britain and across Europe – dismissed cheap print as corrupt and unreliable, the symptom of an itch for news that spread among the vulgar. For Rushworth, by contrast, these public and semi-public proceedings was the real stuff of history, not cabinet histories and private counsel. The exchange of words in textual form, and the reception of and responses to those texts, the arguments staged between them, and the public 'fears and jealousies' that ensued, this was the real basis of seventeenth-century politics. Hence his 'impartial' method, far from being innocent, made a significant and controversial claim for the relevance of print culture to political and military history.

Rushworth promised 'a bare Narrative of matter of Fact' in these documents, one that does not depend on his testimony. He offers his presence and eye-witnessing independently of his own views, of his averring a partial interpretation. By underscoring that he was a witness, he authenticates his

<sup>14</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections. The Third Part* vol. I, fol. a<sup>r</sup> ("To the Reader").



transcriptions of trial proceedings and his access to reliable documents – and no more. This is evident in the passage throughout the whole seven volumes in which his presence is most clearly felt: on 4 January 1642. On that morning King Charles I violated the privileges of parliament by entering the House of Commons with an armed guard in order to demand five members, leaders of the group that had challenged his prerogative, whom he had impeached of treason. Rushworth knew that note-taking was forbidden in parliament, as it might jeopardise liberty of speaking, but his sense of the moment overcame him and he transcribed the king's words in shorthand.<sup>15</sup> That evening the king, who had observed Rushworth's scribbling, sent for him. Later Rushworth described their conversation:

his Majesty Commanded him, to give him a *Copy of his Speech* in the House, Mr. *Rushworth* humbly besought his Majesty (hoping for an Excuse) to call to mind how Mr. *Francis Nevil*, a *Yorkshire* Member of the House, of Commons, was committed to the *Tower*, but for telling his Majesty what words were spoken in the House, by Mr. *Henry Bellasis*, some to the Lord *Faulconbridge*, to which his Majesty smartly replied, *I do not ask you to tell me what was said by any Member of the House but what I said my self*. Whereupon he readily gave Obedience to his Majesties Command, and in his Majesties presence in the Room, called the *Jewel House*, he Transcribed his Majesties *Speech* out of his Characters, his Majesty staying in the Room all the while. And then and there presented the same to the King, which his Majesty was pleased to command to be sent speedily to the *Press*, and the next Morning it came forth in Print.<sup>16</sup>

Rushworth is not only the source for the king's words, authenticated by the king: but the king's words are subsequently consigned to the world of print, where they would become precisely the kind of animadverting pamphlet from which Rushworth would draw his history. The anecdote can be seen to reinforce the legitimacy of Rushworth's method, as well as his reliability as a neutral observer.

The colourfulness of this event is atypical of the texture of the *Historical Collections*, even though it serves to witness the passive construction of authenticity. Rushworth demonstrates his credibility while refusing to

<sup>15</sup> *Commons Journals* (London: 1803) vol. II, 12, 42. See also Colclough D., *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: 2005) 120–195.

<sup>16</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections. The Third Part* I, 478. There is a striking parallel between this incident and one described by the similarly cautious collector of newsbooks George Thomason: see the note inserted at the beginning of the first volume of Thomason's manuscript catalogue, British Library, London, at shelfmark C.38.H.21; also Raymond J., "The Politics and Meaning of Thomason's Tracts", in Mandelbrote G. – Peacey J. (eds.), *Collecting Revolution: The History and Importance of the Thomason Tracts*, forthcoming.



offer personal testimony for a particular interpretation. In one extreme case he prints two texts reporting on Edgehill, the first major battle of the civil war in England, one published by the king and one by parliament, explaining: 'Whereupon ensued the Battel at *Edgehill* near *Keinton* in *Warwickshire*, where the Victory being Challeng'd by either Party, and very differently related, I shall, to avoid the imputation of Partiality, give you the Narratives thereof, as they were then publisht on either side by Authority.'<sup>17</sup> The author of the preface to the fourth and last part of the *Collections* reassured readers: 'his Method is the same, his Materials as good, and the like continued Thread of Impartiality runs through the whole.'<sup>18</sup> Rushworth's method had become – at least in the hands of his publishers – synonymous with impartiality.

Documents played an increasing role in at least some seventeenth-century British historiography.<sup>19</sup> Barbara Shapiro argues that they were a lower form of evidence than an eye-witness account, but were nonetheless a means of establishing facts (if not becoming facts themselves). However, the conflict between Nalson and Rushworth suggests an altogether more fraught enterprise. Shapiro identifies a spectrum that extends from political history written by experienced political observers to antiquarian collection of documents. Yet in the antithesis between Nalson and Rushworth, an antithesis that reverberated in historiographical culture in later-seventeenth century England, this spectrum collapses in on itself. We have, instead, a chiasmic relation between uninterpreted documents and already-interpreted expertise. An unmediated document that lies in preparation for the reader to interpret is pitched against the expertise that mediates and documents only its own interpretation: this is not a spectrum but a contest between the interpretation of authority and the authority of interpretation.

What does this reveal about the culture of news? Two things, one a significant contingency, the other central to the operation of the business of news. First the contingency: Rushworth's history was closely involved with news, not only because he was a licenser, an intelligencer, perhaps a news book editor, but also because his *Historical Collections* became increasingly dependent on weekly newsbooks, until, at the conclusion of the posthumously-published fourth and final part, his narrative turns into

<sup>17</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections. The Third Part* II, 33–38.

<sup>18</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections. The Fourth and Last Part* I, i.

<sup>19</sup> Woolf D.R., *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: 2000) and *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: 2003).

nothing other than a transcription of his collection of copies of the news-book *A Perfect Diurnal*. This passed without objection from his contemporaries; and those historians who were most influenced by Rushworth, including S.R. Gardiner and David Underdown, did not comment on the fact. In Rushworth's *Collections* news serials were transmogrified into history, pure documentary history.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, and more significant: the central fact is that, as deployed in historiography and in news communication, impartiality is complex, contested, and relativized. No one in the debates about news and historiography in this period argues that partiality is desirable. Neither the vengeful Thomas Waring nor the incensed John Nalson actually suggest this: they simply detach it from its etymological association with *party*, another word increasingly resonant in later-seventeenth century Britain, and argue that in the circumstance in which they find themselves to be truly impartial is to be committed to their own party.<sup>21</sup> Even John Dryden, who comes close to embracing partiality, resolves to keep it at arms length. In the Preface to *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) he is unapologetic about his allegiance to a party, and accepts that 'he who draws his Pen for one Party, must expect to make Enemies of the other'. Nonetheless, he claims, he has bated the edge of his satire, and hopes to please the moderate, while 'if you are a Malitious Reader, I expect you should return upon me, that I affect to be thought more Impartial than I am'.<sup>22</sup> In other words, he writes for a party but preserves an honest degree of impartiality, more than his opponents deserve, and the sign of his impartiality is that he acknowledges that the use of words like 'Wit' and 'Fool' are the consequence of party allegiance, and that the Whigs are therefore fools, albeit ones that, he hopes, can laugh at themselves. Dryden's satirical wriggling is such that his knowing embracing of what looks to us like partiality is done in the name of impartiality.

<sup>20</sup> See my forthcoming essay, "This Rushworthian inarticulate rubbish-continent': Newsbooks, Politics, History".

<sup>21</sup> The year after the final part of Rushworth's *Collections*, John Kersey defined 'Impartial' as 'not inclin'd to favour either party; just and equitable' (Kersey John, *A new English dictionary* (London, printed for Henry Bonwicke and Robert Knaplock: 1702). He also used it as a synonym for 'Unbiassed'. See *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. I. Lancashire (Toronto, ON: 2006) URL: [leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=834-9710](http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=834-9710), consulted 2 October 2012.

<sup>22</sup> [Dryden John], *Absalom and Achitophel. A Poem* (London, printed for Jacob Tonson: 1681) fol. <A2><sup>r</sup>. I am grateful to Steve Zwicker for proposing Dryden's relevance here.

Unlikely as it seems, partiality appears to have no exponents. This may be because 'partial' is both a concept and a polemical term: while it would be relatively easy to give the concept a positive value, such a value would never outweigh the negative polemic force of the word. However, while impartiality may be supported by a loose consensus, there is no agreement that it is located either in documents or in eyewitness testimony. Like news, impartiality is divided and polyvalent; we shall find other revealing parallels between the two, but first it is necessary to excavate some of the ways in which 'impartial' is deployed in news culture.

## 2. *Impartial Readers and Intelligence*

'Impartial' is a keyword in a conceptual field, adjacent to and mutually modifying partly cognate terms including: truth, fact, just, honest, faithful, unprejudiced, credible and so on.<sup>23</sup> One way of tracing the history of impartiality would be to map shifts in the conceptual field around it, among those terms with which it intersects and interacts. This is not because impartiality is a nascent concept – as if those who used it were fumbling for the coherent modern concept that existed independently of its formulation – but because of the hierarchical and religious complexion of the society in which it was used, and because of the rhetorical force it could carry. While the etymological sense of the term (not reflecting the beliefs or interests of a party or faction, not a part of a larger whole; the sense in which John Wilkins used it in his *Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, 1668, and John Kersey in his *English Dictionary*, 1702) is particularly strong in seventeenth-century English, the word carries a great deal more weight than 'not partial'.<sup>24</sup>

In news discourse, if we bracket aside those instances when the term 'impartial' is deployed only as a marker of value, and has little or no conceptual content, 'impartial' and its derivatives are used in two main ways. These correspond to what the term qualifies. First, there is the impartial reader. Secondly, there is impartial news, intelligence, reports etc.

<sup>23</sup> See Knights M., "Towards a Social and Cultural History of Keywords and Concepts by the Early Modern Research Group", *History of Political Thought* 31 (2010) 427–448.

<sup>24</sup> See Kersey's definition, quoted in fn.21; and Wilkins John, *An essay towards a real character, and a philosophical language* (London, printed for Samuel Gellibrand and John Martyn: 1668) 203: 'INTEGRITY, *Honesty, intire, equal, impartial, incorrupt, upright. PARTIALITY, unequal, making a difference, accepting of persons*'.

Understanding the place of impartiality in news culture crucially involves connecting these two.

My impression is that across the breadth of early modern print culture the word most commonly qualified by 'impartial' in early-modern English was 'reader'. This impression is confirmed by the haphazard matrix of Early English Books Online, which also confirms that the word is used with increasing frequency in the final quarter of the century. The phrase 'impartial reader' is sufficiently commonplace to warrant but a few examples. Thus John Lewis in 1624: 'Thus hauing sufficiently satisfied (as I hope) the indifferent and impartial Reader, concerning the propounded parts of this controuersie'.<sup>25</sup> An anonymous work of theological controversy printed in English at Douai appeals to 'the iudicious and impartiall Reader'.<sup>26</sup> William Ames insists in another controversial work printed at Amsterdam in 1633, that 'every ordinary impartial Reader must needs' interpret certain words in a certain way.<sup>27</sup> Philip Cary asked in 1690: 'Now what of Absurdity, or Self-Contradiction, can any Ingenuous, or Impartial, Reader find in this Passage?'<sup>28</sup> One news pamphlet, which is an edited, adapted translation of a piece of propaganda by Gustavus Adolphus justifying his invasion of Germany, says that the Swedish king 'maketh no doubt, but that the impartiall reader, or the verie safetie of Nations, will improve and detest so inequitable proceedings off the contrarie party, as they have deserved; and he doth certainly hope, that all equitable Germans and all the Christian wordle [*sic*], will favour his innocencie, and Iust cause of taking armes'.<sup>29</sup> This is striking because of the way it aligns the interest of nations with the judgement of an individual reader (and in that alignment lies the essence of this essay).

It is a common pamphleteer's strategy to distinguish in (often multiple) prefaces between sympathetic readers and hostile, uneducated, low-born and troublemaking readers, between the 'friendly' or 'gentle reader' and

<sup>25</sup> Lewis John, *The vnmasking of the masse-priest* (London, printed for Richard Whitaker: 1624) 203.

<sup>26</sup> [Anonymous], *A reply to M. Nicholas Smith [...] of some pointes of M. Doctour Kellison* (Douai, Widow of Marke Wyon: 1630) 174.

<sup>27</sup> Ames William, *A fresh suit against human ceremonies* (Amsterdam, successors of Giles Thorp: 1633) 461.

<sup>28</sup> Cary Philip, *A just reply to Mr. John Flavell's arguments* (London, Printed for John Harris: 1690) 24.

<sup>29</sup> *The reasons for vvhich [...] Lord Gustavus Adolphus [...] was at length forced to march with an army into Germany* ([Delft]: Printed [by A. Clouting] 'according to the copie of Stralsound', 1630) fol. B4<sup>r</sup>.

Zoilus the detractor.<sup>30</sup> This strategy has a precise counterpart in the formulae of news-writers and controversialists, who refer to the ‘gentle, judicious, & impartiall Reader’, or ‘the conscience of every impartiall Reader’.<sup>31</sup> A 1642 pamphlet on Catholic conspiracies to murder protestants – offering an international perspective, including France and Ireland – assumes a ‘godly and impartiall Reader’.<sup>32</sup> Thomas Brian, in an attack on urinoscopy entitled *The pisse-prophet, or, Certain pisse-pot lectures* (1637) speaks to ‘the understanding and impartiall Reader’, later ‘I [...] appeale unto the learned, judicious, and impartiall Reader’, and later still to ‘the learned, judicious, and impartiall Reader’, in contrast to ‘the ignorant Reader’.<sup>33</sup> Impartial was collocated with other terms: ‘intelligent and impartiall Reader’, the ‘wise and impartiall Reader’, ‘any intelligible & impartiall Reader’.<sup>34</sup> Other words commonly linked to the impartial reader included: ingenuous, intelligent (quite commonly), knowing, prudent, ingenious, equal, learned, patient, considerate, honest, sober. This impartial reader is ‘gentle’, so does not labour with his or her hands, and exercised ‘judgement’ in reading. Here we see another iteration of the complex and seemingly misaligned antithesis between Rushworth and Nalson, the chiasmus between uninterpreted documents and already-interpreted expertise: the reader is a judge and is yet impartial.<sup>35</sup> To be impartial does not preclude judgement; to pass judgement does not risk partiality. If there is no paradox here, it is because there is a sense in which individual judgement is neither personal nor conclusive but emerges from and perhaps expresses

<sup>30</sup> Brayman Hackel H., *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: 2005); Raymond J., *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: 2003) 93–94, 282–285.

<sup>31</sup> Harris Paul, *The excommunication published by the L. archbishop of Dublin Thomas Flemming* (Dublin, Society of Stationers: 1633) 98; Prynne William, *Histrion-Mastix* (London, printed for Michael Sparke: 1633), fols. \*4<sup>r</sup>; \*\*\*2<sup>r</sup>; and pp. 124, 545, 802, 956. Prynne writes (at fol. \*4<sup>r</sup>): ‘imploring not onely your naked acceptations, but your unprejudicated affections too; that so you may thorowly scan it with an impartiall scrutinie, before you preposterously fore-judge it out of a misinformed prejudice’. Also *New News from the Old Exchange* (London, s.n.: 1650); Ley John, *Light for Smoke* (London, printed for Christopher Meredith: 1646), etc.

<sup>32</sup> G.B.C., *Plots, conspiracies and attempts of domestick and forraigne enemies, of the Romish religion* (London, printed for Ralph Rounthwait: 1642).

<sup>33</sup> Brian Thomas, *The pisse-prophet, or, Certain pisse-pot lectures* (London, printed for Richard Thrale: 1637) fols. A4<sup>r</sup>; A5<sup>r</sup>; A<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Hudson Samuel, *Essence and unities of the Church Catholike visible* (London, printed for Christopher Meredith: 1645); Vicars John, *Gods arke overtopping* (London, M. Simons – John Macock, 1646); Bastwick John, *The utter routing of the whole army* (London, John Macock: 1646).

<sup>35</sup> See also Nathan Stogdill’s “Abraham Cowley’s Invigorated Impartiality” in this volume.

a responsibility to the evidence; it does not presuppose interpretation and allows the documents to remain un- or under-interpreted.

The idea of the impartial reader becomes a prominent one. The phrase is used with increasing frequency through the seventeenth century. This may simply be because the phrase becomes a rhetorical formula or cliché; or perhaps, and more intriguingly, because reading becomes more contestatory. In the latter scenario writers defensively touch the charity of the reader holding the present book, pre-emptively seeking to capture goodwill in a world in which they know it is not the norm. This is circumstantially supported by the apparent fact that no such shift occurs in manuscript culture: this polarisation and aggravation of reading is a phenomenon consequent on the diffusion of impersonal and anonymous print culture. Once again: impartiality, and concomitant scepticism, follows from excess, plurality and conflict.

To return to the second significant use of 'impartial' in news culture, that is, as it applied to the *impartial editor* or *impartial intelligence*, both of which complemented the impartial reader. Examples of this, as with examples of 'impartial reader', could be accumulated extensively, though this would not help to distinguish between what is ordinary and what is exceptional in these uses. Listing the titles of some weekly newsbooks illustrates the revealing commonplace:

*The Kingdomes Faithful and Impartial Scout* (February 1648)

*The impartial scout* (June 1650 onwards)

*The Dutch Intelligencer, faithfully communicating the most impartial intelligence of the States of Holland* (September, 1652 onwards)

*The Impartial Intelligencer* (June 1653 onwards)

*Moderate Occurrences: Faithfully communicating the impartial proceedings of the English and Dutch Navies at Sea* (April 1653)

*Perfect and impartial intelligence, of the affairs, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and other parts beyond the sea* (May 1654 onwards)

*The Monthly Intelligencer* [...] *Also, an exact and impartial account* (January 1660)

The first Anglo-Dutch war (1652–1654, a naval war fought between two Protestant republics), in elevating tensions around the interpretation of news, specifically in an international and inter-protestant context, may have focussed on, and helped sharpen, the use of the word. It is possible that these newsbooks are not using a precise register, but one of the things that characterises all of them, and which may be designated by their use of the term *impartial*, is that they combine a series of different

news sources, some translated, and they do not have editorials.<sup>36</sup> Other newsbooks from this period, with different editorial strategies, tend not to use the term 'impartial' in their titles. If this is a deliberate usage, then they anticipate Rushworth: impartiality lies in a variety of uninterpreted documents, and not skilful editorial interpretation. It was in the 1640s that the modern newspaper format of news–editorial–advertising was first devised. This tripartite division of elements, integral to newspapers from the late-seventeenth century to the early twenty-first, juxtaposes the three without dissolving them into a streamlined discourse, relying on the reader to make the connections and actively interrelate the parts in whatever way and to whatever extent he or she chooses. This practice of separating yet juxtaposing news, editorial, and advertisements, of which there is no conscious articulation (that I have found), implied that the editorial was conceived of not only as physically separate, but also as a distinct form of interpretation, more partial.

This relationship between impartial news and editorial is extended and clarified in another, mediating term: *intelligence*. This term was self-consciously defined, and the grounds of its use carefully articulated in newsbooks. Intelligence described news that was exclusive or had been already partly interpreted. Like *information*, *intelligence* was *interpreted* news. Intelligence was news that had been digested by the editor; information was the editorial matter that guided interpretation, and *informed* the judgement of readers. Intelligence revealed the expertise of the editor distilling the news; mediated news was superior to entirely undigested news. Intelligence distinguished one editor, and one newsbook, from the competition, though it was crucially distinct from the partiality of the editorial matter. These were precise terms. *The Scottish Dove* was a London newsbook that appeared weekly between October 1643 and December 1646, with a subtitle that advertised: 'Brings Intelligence from the Armies of both Kingdomes, and relates other Passages observable, for Information and Instruction.' In July 1645, a few weeks after the Battle of Naseby had

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<sup>36</sup> There are exceptions, but their circumstances reinforce the general precept. Beginning with *Mercurius Pragmaticus Revived* (10 June 1651), a series of newsbooks that were purely polemical used 'impartial' in their titles – *Mercurius Scommaticus, communicating his most impartial intelligence* (8 July 1651), *Mercurius Elencticus, communicating his most impartial intelligence from all parts* (June 1651), and *Mercurius Britannicus. Communicating his most impartial intelligence from all parts* (26 July 1652). These were clearly imitating each other and were using the term 'impartial' ironically (which was conspicuous, hence the imitation), precisely because they were partisan.



proved the crucial turning point in the civil war, its editor George Smith wrote:

It may be some will tell me, (as they have) that I digresse from the way of intelligence, &c. to them I answer; That I digresse not from the way of information, which I have ever propounded to my selfe to mix with my intelligence; information to cleare the judgement, is better then intelligence to please the fancie; and by such information the evill causes may be removed, from whence flow evill effects and sad intelligences; But till mens judgements are right they will erre in action: and erroneous actions bring forth severall disasters. But if we, everie one of us, would forsake our own ends, and seeke (in our places) to further Gods Worke, to set up truth in our hearts, and seeke to be at peace one with another, as we have Covenanted before God; all our intelligence will be joyous, and God will make us a happy and blessed people.<sup>37</sup>

Smith's guiding light here, the matter that will rectify men's judgements and intelligences, is, once again, *providence*. In this, as in his understanding of the role of editor, he corresponds to Rushworth. In the interrelations among the carefully-deployed terms of seventeenth-century news culture, *news*, *intelligence*, and *information*, editorial interpretation was understood not to lead away from impartiality: it mediated between the reader and the news, and evinced truth from news and information.<sup>38</sup>

While impartiality is positive, partiality is commonly represented as undesirable in early-modern news reporting, from the news pamphlet *The Spoyle of Antwerp* (1576), in which George Gascoigne protests: 'neither mallice to the one syde, nor partiall affection to the other, shall make my pen to swarue any iote from truth of that which I will set down & saw executed',<sup>39</sup> to the 1684 pamphlet *Sad and dreadful News from New-England*, which begins 'I shall not trouble the Reader with any Preface, but Impartially relate the matter of Fact'.<sup>40</sup> In a 1624 coranto (a near-weekly foreign news serial), the editor observed: 'in our Newes we delivered some things in severall places as wee get the tidings in severall parts to shew you how the parties agree in their relations, seeing it is knowne that many

<sup>37</sup> *Scottish Dove* 92 (25 July 1645) 723.

<sup>38</sup> Raymond J., *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (1996; Oxford: 2005) 158–163.

<sup>39</sup> Gascoigne George, *The Spoyle of Antwerpe* (London, J. Charlewood for Richard Jones: 1576) fol. Aii<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *Sad and dreadful News from New-England* (London, printed for Langley Curtis: 1684) fol. A<sup>r</sup>.



write partially'.<sup>41</sup> Here again, impartiality in news seems to be achieved through presenting a variety of inevitably partial sources, from which the truth can be extracted.

This may be the same editor writing in 1622:

What we receiue in doubtfull termes, wee will not report peremptorily, but you shall haue it as we receiue it, neither will we print euery report, And although to confesse truth, we wish well, yet that we are not partiall, you may perceiue by our relating this skirmish betweene Count *Mansfield*, and M<sup>r</sup> Tilly. Wee write a continuation, that you may see by the proceedings, that there is good dependency between the relations, wherein we purpose to keepe nere to the Lawes of Historie [...].<sup>42</sup>

This seems unremarkable in most respects: truth is the product of impartiality, and impartiality involves printing diverse sources, though not all of them. However, this commonplace usage implies a different model of truthful reporting than the one we might expect. The veracity of an individual report could be constituted by the eye-witness who reported it, and the reliability of that eye witness was, on one account, proportional to his or her degree of expertise and social status; and in this respect news replicates or resembles the model of natural philosophy.<sup>43</sup> In his 1667 history of the Royal Society, Thomas Sprat praises it for crossing social boundaries, and drawing on the expertise of tradesmen; yet also because 'the farr greater Number are *Gentlemen*, free, and unconfin'd', who do not degenerate to consider '*present profit*' and petty interests. 'Impartiality' is the true arbiter of '*Philosophical Inquisitions*'; yet status and wealth lead to superior judgement.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand there is another account, also available in natural philosophy: there are witnesses who are reliable because they are innocent, because they are not judges, and because they are indifferent and disinterested. The extreme example of this kind of witness is the inanimate object, which cannot speak. The innocent witness also provides credible testimony, and this opposition correlates to my

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Nelson C. – Secombe M., "The creation of the periodical press 1620–1695", in Barnard J. – McKenzie D.F., *A History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4: 1557–1695 (Cambridge: 2002) 533–550, here 537. See also n. 4, above.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted Brownlee N., *The Language of Periodical News in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newcastle upon Tyne: 2011) 57.

<sup>43</sup> Shapin S. – Schaffer S., *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: 1985); Shapiro, *Culture of Fact* 94–101.

<sup>44</sup> Sprat Thomas, *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London, printed by T.R. for J. Martyn and J. Allestry: 1667) 67, 353. I am grateful to Noah Moxham for pointing out this passage.

dichotomy between uninterpreted texts and expert interpretation. Gascoigne, in his 1576 pamphlet, articulates his authority as an eye-witness to the sacking of Antwerp; he anticipates or sets a precedent for many subsequent news pamphlets and periodicals that testify that their sources were present at a particular event and write with credible authority. Yet the truth-establishing procedures of printed news necessitate an additional stage, one that is realised in the relationship between the impartial reader and the impartial intelligencer.<sup>45</sup>

### 3. *Exporting and Importing News*

To see how and why this is so, it is necessary to consider how news publications functioned on a broader scale. It has been often observed that there is an intimate relationship between news and trade, from the manuscript newsletters that were collected by the Fuggers family of bankers between 1568 and 1605,<sup>46</sup> to the publication of lists of ships and their cargoes in printed newspapers, addressed to a broader, less specialist readership. There is also a close association between news and war: when wars broke out, news services appeared, or increased capacity. In Britain this was the case in the 1590s (the French wars of Religion), the 1620s (the Thirty Years War), and the 1640s (the civil wars in Britain). News was mobile: it depended on international communication, translation, networks that crossed political, theological, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The first sustained flurry of news pamphlets in Britain was caused by the translation of French pamphlets about the wars of religion. While these were mainly written from the Protestant point of view, this was not always the case, and it is surprising, perhaps, to find Catholic perspectives expressed in printed news in the 1590s. John Eliot's *Aduise giuen by a Catholike gentleman, to the nobilitie & commons of France* (1589) foregrounds the confessional barrier between Protestant and Roman Catholic, but it nonetheless presents a specifically Catholic point of view in a non-satirical manner. It does so precisely because this is an aspect of the news; news

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<sup>45</sup> For the impartial reader in the early Enlightenment, see Rainer Godel's contribution in this volume.

<sup>46</sup> These were not produced by or even strictly speaking for the Fuggers, as has sometimes been suggested, but were bespoke selections from the commercial network of manuscript newsletter production and distribution that spanned Europe, from Italy through the Holy Roman Empire and far beyond. See <<http://www.univie.ac.at/fuggerzeitungen/en/>>.

has to move freely between centres of communication, and religious transparency can facilitate this in some circumstances.

It is unremarkable that the British should have expressed strong interest in the French Wars of Religion – and especially that stage between the accession of the Protestant Henri of Navarre to the French throne and his reconversion to Catholicism in 1593 – because the fortunes of Protestantism in England and Wales (and Scotland less directly) were interwoven with that conflict.<sup>47</sup> However, it is striking that these French wars should have been the catalyst for a stage-shift in British printed news culture: for it was the appearance of these francophone pamphlets that marked the quantitative increase in news publication in London, and, moreover, that set the template for what a British news pamphlet would look like in the next century.

These pamphlets were translated with very little adjustment: an editorial voice was seldom added, the translations were generally quite literal within the parameters of late-sixteenth century translation, there was little in the way of cultural accommodation.<sup>48</sup> Hence *The true discourse of the wonderfull victorie, obtained by Henrie the fourth, the French King, and King of Nauarre, in a battell against those of the League* (1590), refers in passing to guardian angels in a way that fits Huguenot culture and not Anglophone Protestant culture in 1590. It is a modest example, but it is characteristic of the way news is imported in two ways: first, when news was imported it underwent very little mediation. Secondly, news moves across networks, and news centres throughout Europe rely upon connectivity to receive and distribute news.<sup>49</sup> This was only secondarily because of local legal restrictions founded upon suspicion of the disruptive effect of domestic news; it was more directly because of a deep

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<sup>47</sup> Raymond, *Pamphlets* 103–108; Voss P.J., *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh, PA: 2001); Parmelee L.F., *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester, NY: 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*; Brownlees, *Language of Periodical News* 33 and *passim*. A searchable catalogue of translations into English, including news categories, can be found at <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/rcc/>>. I am grateful to Sara Barker for discussions of news translation.

<sup>49</sup> Arblaster P., “Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European system of communications”, in Raymond J. (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth Century Britain and Europe* (London: 2006) 19–34; Raymond J., “International News and the Seventeenth-Century English Newspaper”, in Harms R. – Raymond J. – Salman J. (eds.), *Not Dead Things: The Dissemination of Popular Print in Britain, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500–1900* (Leiden: 2013). Demonstrating these networks is one objective of the Leverhulme-funded News Networks in Early Modern Europe project, <http://newscom.english.qmul.ac.uk/>.

appetite for foreign news; but most immediately because that was how the news infrastructure developed. News in any one locale was an extension of transnational news.

Another illustrative example can be found in Joseph Mede, a Cambridge don (which means, importantly, that in terms of British networks he was not within or close to an *entrepôt*), who in the 1620s supplied a more or less weekly newsletter to several recipients as part of a patronage-based, semi-professional newsletter service. Mede gathered news from across Europe through receiving newsletters, and excerpted it into his own newsletters with minimal editorial input except through selection: that is to say, he did not summarise or digest it, or insert it into a narrative. Instead he supplied it with headings indicating date and place of origin (the origin of the report, not the place in which the news originated: this was characteristic of printed and manuscript news throughout Europe). Gradually, presumably in order to save labour, he devised a system whereby he put all of the general, mostly overseas news in one document, in effect a manuscript separate, of which he made multiple copies. This he sent partnered with a personal letter exclusively for an individual recipient, which contained tailored domestic and overseas news with commentary and personal remarks. When the first English language news serials or *corantos* appeared in the 1620s – themselves translations from German and Dutch – he began to copy news from them (initiating a move from print to manuscript: this traffic went in both directions), and when he was busy, would simply send the printed *corantos* along with his newsletter. Gradually the printed *corantos* displaced the manuscript separate of news he compiled.<sup>50</sup>

These printed *corantos* were unembellished translations. In September 1621 Mede reported that the publisher Thomas Archer was imprisoned ‘for making or adding to *Corrantoës*’, and was replaced by ‘another who hath gott license to print them & sell them honestly translated out of Dutch’.<sup>51</sup> During the 1620s printing news was a risky business: it was probably commercially profitable, but the government was at times suspicious of printed news, because it impinged upon the highly sensitive topic of foreign policy, and British non-involvement in the wars on the continent. Moreover, foreign news could in many ways convey in and par-

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<sup>50</sup> Mede’s letters to Sir Martin Stuteville can be found in the British Library, London, at Harl. MS 389.

<sup>51</sup> British Library, Harl. MS 389, fol. 122<sup>r</sup>.

anticipate in British news, about which there was marked apprehensiveness on behalf of the government, and a set of mores and conventions that effectively prevented publication. The concern over mere translation, in contrast to 'making' or 'adding', which resulted in Archer's imprisonment, presumably reflected a desire to prevent more adaptive translations from impinging on these sensitive areas. And yet the Amsterdam corantos were not written for a British audience: the readers of the English translations, even those as educated as Mede's correspondents, possessed a different geographical and cultural context. The texts needed more cultural mediation than the censor allowed. So when Mede sent out printed corantos with his newsletters, he added annotations accommodating things that were lost and gained in translation. Finding the phrase 'The Turkes day at Regensburg [...]', Mede replaced 'Turkes day' with 'Reicks day', and added a marginal gloss: 'so they call the day of the Imperiall Diet'. Other marginal notes indicated that 'Dansich' was in Prussia, and 'Siebenberghen' in Transylvania.<sup>52</sup> Once again, two characteristics appear: news is structured around the international network that supplies it, and is thoroughly European in content and structure; and, secondly, it comes to the reader's hands with strikingly little mediation despite cross-cultural divergences and conflict.<sup>53</sup>

These examples could be easily multiplied: printed news in Britain, as elsewhere in northern Europe, reflected the communication and trade routes that spread news, and when it was printed it relied on typographical partitioning and juxtaposition rather than on digestion and editorial correlation. Even when editors wrote editorials, or brief connecting paragraphs between reports (as the coranto-editor Thomas Gainsford did in 1622–1624; which practice became common in the 1640s), they did not significantly adapt the content. The authority of the report – one source of its authority – lay in its fidelity to an original. The British news press of the seventeenth century was full of foreign news: the two most influential and widest-read periodicals, *Mercurius Politicus* (1650–1660) and *The London Gazette* (1665–) are distinguished by the predominance of overseas news, some directly relating to conflicts that affected the British Isles, other news

<sup>52</sup> British Library, Harl. MS 389, fols.79, 82; *Corante* (Amsterdam, 25 June 1621); *Courant* (Amsterdam, 25 May 1621); *Corante* (Amsterdam, 3 July 1621).

<sup>53</sup> Randall D., "Joseph Mead, novellante: News, Sociability and Credibility in Early Stuart England", *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006) 293–312; Brownlees, *Language of Periodical News* 51–53. See also the discussion of circuits versus networks in the introduction by Harms, Raymond, and Salman to *Not Dead Things*.

presented because it is curious, such as the long account, in *Politicus*, of the ceremonial circumcision of the heir to the Ottoman throne.<sup>54</sup> This fact has long been treated as the consequence of censorship, an explanation that has never been entirely satisfactory; but whatever the causes of this focus away from domestic news, it meant that readers of news were well informed about events across Europe. Readers understood that overseas news events were thoroughly associated with and connected to more local events, whether the latter were obtained by reading or conversation. Readers were accustomed to reading foreign and domestic news alongside each other. While the sea cut off the north Atlantic archipelago, the sea was an efficient and relatively inexpensive mode of transport, and connected the islands to mainland Europe, and readers north of the channel understood themselves to be part of a European community of news.

Yet this raises the question of what these readers knew to be true. News is, after all, consistently represented throughout Europe, and notably in Britain and the Dutch republic, as unreliable, and as being enveloped with suspicion. Satirists mock all news publications, from their origins, as being the products of fevered imagination, more romance than history. They suggest that news, especially printed news, is a vulgar appetite, associated with those with low social status, and that it therefore speaks untruths to the credulous. Once again, there is a close connection between increasing news and the growth of scepticism. Because of social anxieties and political resistance, news discourse is surrounded by a culture of hermeneutic suspicion. Hence its authority is consistently at stake.

News was made reliable by eyewitness testimony: at least, that is the model of reliable communication most closely associated with news.<sup>55</sup> A report is reliable because one or preferably more witnesses with established social credit testify to it. This pattern certainly characterises some news reports, including many of those with the most distinct voices, such as Gascoigne's. The letter is the most common mode of supplying news, and traces of this form, associated with intrinsic testimony, are often reproduced within printed news. However, as the predominant model for the authority of news it is clearly insufficient. First, actual appeal to per-

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<sup>54</sup> Raymond J. (ed.), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England* (Moreton-in-Marsh: 1993) 265–266, 270–272.

<sup>55</sup> Hacking I., *The Emergence of Probability* (Cambridge: 1975); Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*; Hunter J.P., *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century British Fiction* (New York: 1990); Brownlees, *Language of Periodical News*; Shapin S., *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL: 1995).

sonal authority and eyewitness experience appears in a small minority of reports. One might counter that it is supplied instead by the authority of the journalist or editor who passes on the report; yet while this is in some instances true (perhaps in the case of the reliable and conscientious Mede for example) it is also the case that most journalists or editors efface themselves, intervening as little as possible in reporting, and repudiate the idea of personal authority. Secondly, most news comes from overseas, deriving from reports, often anonymous, written within the often quite different conventions and expectations of another language and culture. The authors of these reports are often plainly Roman Catholic, or different kinds of protestants, and yet their accounts of inter-confessional conflict (such as the French Wars of Religion) are nonetheless treated as having intrinsic value.<sup>56</sup> The value of news – again, in British culture, but I suspect the same is true across much of Europe – is commonly treated as independent of the politics and religion of the initial source, and no effort is made to iron out marks of difference. The value of news can be – is universally – imported and exported.

#### 4. *Impartial News*

News crosses political and geographic and confessional boundaries and stays news. Just as there is a geography of scepticism (X is not to be believed, because it is spoken by a German),<sup>57</sup> so there is a geography of impartiality. The credibility of news is mobile. Its veracity is not impaired nor its moral authority compromised in translation. This very peculiar characteristic is enabled by (and probably necessitates) the role of the impartial reader and the impartial intelligencer. The impartial reader as we saw was a reader of printed news who read sympathetically and intelligently, albeit in a contestatory world; he or she exercised judgement without prejudice. The impartial intelligencer passed on news in a relatively unmediated fashion – and, as we have seen, this includes heterogeneous foreign news, news that by definition speaks from alternative perspectives and from sometimes alien positions of authority. It is the symbiotic relationship between the impartial intelligencer and the impartial reader that

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<sup>56</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that Roman Catholic testimony was also accepted in court.

<sup>57</sup> Dooley, *Social History of Scepticism*.



gives the authority to the news and makes it possible for judgement to be exercised and, ultimately, truth to be discerned. The model of truth in news is ultimately that of a heterogeneous, open-ended documentary culture, in which readers are active. This is not just a convention of the culture, but it actively structured news networks and the written and printed products that appear at some of the entrepôts within those networks.

It is made possible by the fact that news is intrinsically incomplete – hence the fundamental connection between periodicity and seriality and news (and, incidentally, the importance of providence). One report must necessarily anticipate another to confirm or confute it, or to unfold the consequences of the earlier news, and that second report must anticipate a third and fourth to discover and develop the emerging pattern or to break it altogether. One 1640s newsbook editor wrote:

Truth is the daughter of Time. Relations of battels, fights, skirmishes, and other passages and proceedings of concernment are not alwaies to be taken on credit at the first hand; for that many times they are uncertaine, and the truth doth not so conspicuously appeare till a second or third relation. And hence it is, that victories sometimes fall much short of the generall expectation; and battels oftentimes prove but skirmishes, and great overthrowes related to be given to the enemy prove oftentimes an equall ballancing losse on both sides [...].<sup>58</sup>

The silent omission at the end of the partial quotation from Francis Bacon is ‘not of Authority’: ‘Truth is the Daughter of Time not of Authority.’<sup>59</sup> It is this that makes newspapers, as much as history, engines for the production of truth. It is the reader’s role to follow those updates and corrections, week by week: in him or her this potential for truth production is realized. Not only by revising news in the light of subsequent news, but by collocating the diverse news of Europe, and finding within them true intelligence.

There is perhaps a chiasmus implicit in the formation of the term and concept of impartiality, at least as it is deployed in news culture. Impartiality is suspended in the opposition between, on the one hand, unin-

<sup>58</sup> *The True Informer* 11 (1 December 1643) 82.

<sup>59</sup> Bacon’s phrase is ‘Recte enim Veritas Temporis filia dicitur, non Autoritatis’. See Bacon Francis, *Novum Organum*, in *The Instauration magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts*, ed. and trans. G. Rees (Oxford: 2004) 132. The English is quoted here from the English summary of 1676: Bacon Francis, *The novum organum of Sir Francis Bacon* (London, printed for Thomas Lee: 1676) 13. Since ‘veritas filia temporis’ was a common phrase, and thus perhaps not a partial quotation from Bacon, Bacon’s phrase colludes with the chiasmus I formulate here.



terpreted, unmediated texts joined with the judicious reader and, on the other hand, the authoritative interpreter. Impartiality is caught in a conflict between a narrative that is incomplete and one that has been already explained, between freedom and guidance, between innocence and experience. And this is perhaps what Rushworth saw, after news discourse had rapidly been developing in Britain for several decades. As an editor of a documentary history of the civil war, he was perhaps selective and tendentious, but in his vision of furnishing the reader with collections of documents that could not sit uninterpreted, he showed what he had learned from gathering news and intelligencing during the civil wars. While he could see that his model of historiography, what he called his 'impartial method', was intrinsically controversial, it also nonetheless crystallised what was understood as the process of 'impartiality' in reading and writing news.

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### 3. LITERATURE, POLITICS, AND THE LAW



'PARTIALITIE IN A IUDGE, IS A TURPITUDE':  
PARTIAL JUDGES AND JUDICIOUS REVENGERS  
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA

Derek Dunne

[W]ee must vprightly Iudge, according to Equitie, without (in the least sort) beeing drawne, by respecting eyther Person or Profite, to beare a Partiall Hand in the Execution of Iudgement. Partialtie in a Iudge, is a Turpitude, which doth soyle and stayne all the Actions done by him.<sup>1</sup>

These are the words of Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), one of the leading jurists of early modern England, taken from his speech on the discovery of abuses and corruption of officers published in 1607. The relatively early date of such a statement on the dangers of partiality and, by extension, the importance of impartiality within the legal profession, alerts us to the concept's long and varied history. Before the appropriation of the 'impartial' epithet in areas as diverse as theological debate, nascent journalism, and party-political discourse, Coke's reference turns our attention to the term's importance within legal discourse. Impartiality, the act of not being partial to either side, is fundamental to the operation of a courtroom, where opposing parties sought to convince a judge of their version of the facts of the case. Within a judicial setting the danger of partiality becomes self-evident – without an impartial judiciary the basis of law and order in society is severely undermined.<sup>2</sup> When imported into other discourses, a judge's impartiality is taken as an ideal to be emulated by others. But as Coke's words make clear, an awareness of the ideal of impartiality must be coupled with the knowledge that this is not always possible.

I want to touch briefly on some examples of impartiality as an ideal drawn from within early modern legal discourse, before looking beyond the legal profession to find instances where this ideal is tested and critiqued. The ultimate example of judicial impartiality comes from the Old

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<sup>1</sup> Coke Edward, *The Lord Coke his Speech and Charge with a Discouerie of the Abuses and Corruption of Officers* (London, for Christopher Pursett: 1607) fol. C3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> '[A] central element of the concept of corrective justice is adjudicating disputes without regard to the status of the disputants': Posner R., *Law and Literature: A Misunderstood Relation*, 3rd ed. ([1988]; London: 2009) 58.

Testament (1 Kings 3.16–28), with King Solomon refusing to be swayed by the opposing claims of two women, and instead offering to divide an infant between them. The fact that Solomon acts in the role of judge made the subject ‘highly relevant to the legal profession’, so much so that a late-sixteenth century painting of the scene is known to have hung in the hall at Middle Temple, a central space in the life of any of the Inns of Court.<sup>3</sup> William Lambarde (1536–1601) also wrote on the importance of judicial impartiality, in a legal treatise aimed at amending corrupt practices within the profession. In it Lambarde describes the emblem of a judge as being ‘rightly pourtrayed with wide ears, but without eyes at all, to denote that he ought fully and patiently to heare the whole Cause, but not affectionately to respect any party’.<sup>4</sup> As with the case of King Solomon, such an image is symbolic more than practical; by giving the emblematic judge distinctly unrealistic features this reinforces the distance between ideal and reality. When it came to portraits of actual judges, these were more faithful to real life, and again the equation between judgement and impartiality is unmistakeable. Cooper translates a Latin inscription on the portrait of Sir James Dyer (1510–1582) from the Middle Temple as follows: ‘Look upon the portrait of an upright judge, who was both the light and the ornament of the Law: whom neither the rich man with his wealth, nor the poor man with his flowing tears, could turn aside from the strict line of justice’.<sup>5</sup>

Running through these examples is an awareness that the upright judge must act impartially, but without any indication of how this is to be achieved. By looking outside the enclave of law, it may be possible to excavate alternative viewpoints on the operation of impartiality in early modern England. Instead of treating the term in the abstract, as it often is by professional legal writers, I look to the early modern playhouse where all manner of discourse is subjected to intense scrutiny. The stage is where we see the law being put into practice and tested, imaginatively speaking, whether in the form of Shylock’s treatment in *The Merchant of Venice* or

<sup>3</sup> Cooper T., “Professional Pride and Personal Agendas: Portraits of Judges, Lawyers, and Members of the Inns of Court, 1560–1630”, in Archer J.E. – Goldring E. – Knight S. (eds.), *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester: 2010) 157–178, here 160.

<sup>4</sup> Lambarde William, *The courts of justice corrected and amended. Or the corrupt lawyer untrust, lasht and quasht* (London, for George Lindsey: 1642) 5.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Iudis effigiem iusti vultusque verendi/Conspice, qui legis, luxque decusque fuit./ Quem dives loculis, lachrimis quem pauper doctis/Iusticeae a norma flectere non potuit’, in Cooper, “Professional pride and personal agendas” 166.



Angelo's flawed impartiality when he is installed as Chief Justice in *Measure for Measure*: 'When I, that censure him, do so offend,/Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,/And nothing come in partial' (2.1.29).<sup>6</sup> The former play defeats the literalism of Shylock's demand for a pound of flesh in the courts of Venice, but at the expense of a real equitable verdict, as Shylock is deprived of his money, his lands, and his religion. In the latter, Angelo's strict adherence to the law despite his own frailties warns of the perils of too strictly enforcing the law to the letter. Such instances allow us to glimpse the tensions inherent in impartiality by staging its opposite, within the arena of the playhouse where an audience's partialities are actively encouraged.

It seems reasonable to look at law through the lens provided by the early modern stage, often featuring as it does courtroom scenes, lawyers, points of evidence and questionable alibis. I have chosen to focus on a genre centrally concerned with questions of crime and punishment, yet which has received little attention from a legal literary perspective.<sup>7</sup> Revenge tragedy may not seem like the most obvious place to look for meditations on the nature of justice or the need for impartiality. After all, revenge is by its nature a very partial activity. It is my contention, however, that the staging of revenge raises all sorts of questions about the interaction between the official legal discourse of impartiality and the difficulty of realizing that ideal in particular cases. It is no coincidence that this genre enjoyed huge popularity at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century, a time which the legal historian J.S. Cockburn describes as a period of 'mini-revolution' for the English legal system.<sup>8</sup> Jurisdictional conflicts were common, while each branch of law was itself undergoing major changes in how legal business was conducted in early modern England.<sup>9</sup> A case in point is the question of equity, and where it

<sup>6</sup> For a more positive example of a judge who resists partiality, see Solinus's verdict at the start of *The Comedy of Errors*: 'Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more./I am not partial to infringe our laws' (1.1.3–4). References to Shakespeare's plays, other than *Titus Andronicus*, are taken from Blakemore Evans G. et al. (eds.), *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed. (Boston: 1997).

<sup>7</sup> With some significant exceptions, for example, Hutson L., *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: 2007); Raffield P., "'Terras Astraea reliquit': *Titus Andronicus* and the Loss of Justice", in Raffield P. – Watt G. (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Law* (Oxford: 2008) 203–220.

<sup>8</sup> Cockburn J.S., "Trial By the Book? Fact and Theory in Criminal Process", in Baker J.H. (ed.), *Legal Records and the Historian* (London: 1978) 60–79, here 78.

<sup>9</sup> Prest W., *The Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar, 1590–1640* (Oxford: 1986) 262.

rightfully belongs within the English legal system: 'It is no exaggeration to say that the question of equity dominated jurisprudential thought of the entire century'.<sup>10</sup> Equity was thought to soften the severity of the letter of the law in cases where it would be unfair to apply the general rule to a particular instance. Commonly associated with the courts of Chancery, which were presided over by the Chancellor and popularly known as the 'court of conscience', equity could thus be seen as a corrective to the literalism of common law procedure. Yet it has been necessary to modify such a neat division in recent years, as equity is shown to be an integral part of the common law as well as other jurisdictions.<sup>11</sup>

If we look past the more gruesome aspects of revenge plays, there emerges a pervasive concern with issues of judgement and justice throughout the genre. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* stages four complete trial scenes, one of which is followed by a public execution onstage. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, the word 'justice' and its cognates appear no fewer than twenty-nine times. And in John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, the arch-villain Piero twists the law to his advantage at the trial of his own daughter, Mellida. For this reason, I want to re-examine the genre from a legal standpoint in order to shed light on the prehistory of impartiality. It will not be possible to treat these plays in their full complexity in such a relatively short space, so I will be focusing on fictional representations of judges and scenes of judgement, to see how they measure up to the ideal of judicial impartiality. First of all, I will look at *The Spanish Tragedy* in some depth, as it is the first in a long line of revenge plays, before discussing more briefly scenes of judgement in *Titus Andronicus*, *Antonio's Revenge*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*, to see whether the question of impartiality, or lack thereof, is sustained across a number of plays.

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<sup>10</sup> Ziolkowski T., *The Mirror of Justice: Literary Reflections of Legal Crises* (Princeton: 1997) 163. See also Fortier M., *The Culture of Equity in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: 2005); Klinck D., *Conscience, Equity, and the Court of Chancery in Early Modern England* (Farnham: 2010).

<sup>11</sup> On this point see Hutson L., "Imagining Justice: Kantorowicz and Shakespeare", *Representations* 106 (2009) 118–142. Hutson rightly points out that equity is by no means incompatible with common law procedure, and therefore is not the sole property of the courts of Chancery: 'Rather than an arbitrary discretion to suspend law, equity is an interpretative enlargement of law by fiction. It reconciles the potentially unjust generality of the law with the particularity of individual circumstances by generating fictions of the general intent behind the words of the law', 132.

'*They reckon no laws that meditate revenge*' (*The Spanish Tragedy*, 1.3.44)<sup>12</sup>

*The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) deals with a father's revenge after his son is murdered by the King's son Lorenzo and his accomplice Balthazar. Hieronimo the father then seeks justice on behalf of his son, and eventually kills Lorenzo and Balthazar in suitably bloody fashion by getting them to act in his 'play-within-a-play', the first of its kind in Elizabethan theatre. Some critics have suggested that *The Spanish Tragedy* shows 'the dehumanizing power of the revenge impulse', and that Hieronimo 'must take on the savage amorality' of his enemy.<sup>13</sup> But such a straightforward reading is repeatedly complicated by Kyd. To begin with, it is no idle detail that Kyd gives Hieronimo the role of Knight Marshal to the Spanish court, which means he sits in judgement on all sorts of cases that come before him, much in the manner of an English Chief Justice. Therefore our first revenger has a thorough knowledge of the law. And in fact Hieronimo is prepared to pursue his son's murderers through perfectly legal means. His first course of action is to sue for justice: 'I will go plain me to my lord the king,/And cry aloud for justice through the court' (*The Spanish Tragedy*, 3.7.69), where 'court' signifies both the royal court and a place of law. As Hutson says, his pursuit of revenge 'is not a wild or violent one; it is the path of judicial due process'.<sup>14</sup> Despite his initial willingness to use the court system, he is forced outside the legal system by his enemy Lorenzo, and this is important to bear in mind when reviewing Hieronimo's subsequent actions.

Within two hundred lines of discovering the body of his son, and before the idea of private revenge has been broached, Hieronimo exclaims to the heavens:

O world, no world, but mass of public wrongs,  
 Confus'd and fill'd with murder and misdeeds;  
 O sacred heavens! If this unhallow'd deed,  
 [...]
 Shall unreveal'd and unrevenged pass,  
 How should we term your dealings just,  
 If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust? (3.2.3–11).

<sup>12</sup> All references taken from Kyd Thomas, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. P. Edwards (London: 1959).

<sup>13</sup> Semenza G.M.C., 'The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge', in Sullivan Jr. G.A. – Cheney P. – Hadfield A. (eds.), *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion* (Oxford: 2006) 50–60, here 54; Mercer P., *Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge* (London: 1987) 41.

<sup>14</sup> Hutson, *Invention of Suspicion* 284.

The crux of the play, and to a certain extent of the genre, is articulated here, whereby revengers seek justice in an unjust world. Hieronimo's utterance here borrows directly from the rhetoric of law, which is seen as the mainstay against disorder and confusion. For example, compare William Lambarde's charge to a quarter session jury in 1595:

[I]f these good laws were not, our whole course and conversation should be disturbed and could be nothing else but a continual confusion, horror, and a living death.<sup>15</sup>

In a more modern formulation, Alain Supiot, in his book *Homo Juridicus*, says that the 'devices of the law must be held firmly in place if human beings and society are not to fall apart'.<sup>16</sup> Judges both fictional and actual fear the 'confusion' that would inevitably result from neglect of the law, which preserves the commonwealth and keeps anarchy at bay. That Hieronimo borrows from the ideology of law as the cornerstone of civilization while meditating on his son's murder is significant, again highlighting that his primary aim is the reinstatement of justice more than the pursuit of a personal vendetta. As I turn to the various scenes of judgement Kyd stages in his revenge play, one of the primary markers of a flawed legal system is shown to be the lack of impartiality displayed by those in authority, thus inviting the audience to 'begin judging the judgement of the judges'.<sup>17</sup>

The opening scene, set in a classical underworld, shows the ghost of Don Andrea, a Spanish noble killed in Spain's war with Portugal, meeting the judges Minos, Rhadamanth, and Aeacus, who are to decide where to send him in the afterlife. The case proves too much for them however, and so they decide to send him on to their king, Pluto, who will 'doom him as best seems his majesty' (1.1.53). As king of the underworld, Pluto is the highest legal authority and guarantor of justice. Yet his decision on Don Andrea's fate sets a worrying trend for exemplary justice in the play. He is flanked by his lover Persephone, who interrupts the proceedings as follows:

Whereat fair Proserpine began to smile,  
And begg'd that only she might give my doom.  
Pluto was pleas'd, and seal'd it with a kiss (1.1.78–80).

<sup>15</sup> Lambarde William, "Charge for the Peace at Maidstone, 29 April, 1595", in Read C. (ed.), *William Lambarde and Local Government: His "Ephemeris" and Twenty-nine Charges to Juries and Commissions* (New York: 1962) 117.

<sup>16</sup> Supiot A., *Homo Juridicus: On the Anthropological Function of the Law*, trans. Saskia Brown (London: 2007) 40.

<sup>17</sup> Semenza G.M.C., "The Spanish Tragedy and Metatheatre", in Smith E. – Sullivan G.A. Jr. (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy* (Cambridge: 2010) 153–162, here 156.

Pluto steps aside to allow his lover to decide the matter, and her verdict is to have Don Andrea's killer, the Portuguese prince Balthazar, lose his life in return. So Persephone's 'doom' sets in train the entire revenge cycle we are about to witness, including the deaths of Balthazar, Lorenzo, Horatio, Hieronimo, and even the innocent Bel-imperia. Rather than being suggestive of equity and justice, this first encounter with the law displays a disturbing mix of partiality and seduction.

The obvious objection here is that this takes place in the Underworld – that is, a hell of sorts – and so unfair judgements are to be expected. But in the world above, we are shown a similar blend of prejudice and favouritism. In the next scene, we see the King of Spain adjudicating between his own son Lorenzo and Hieronimo's son Horatio in the matter of Balthazar's capture on the battlefield. Of course this means he is breaking the cardinal rule of not judging cases involving family members; in the words of Coke '*Caue ne sis Iudex inter Amicos* because *inter Amicos Inditare* [*sic*], Amongst friends to iudge, is a thing nothing more dangerous'.<sup>18</sup> While Horatio was the one who forced Balthazar to yield, the King's verdict divides the spoils of war between both parties. Hieronimo intervenes to warn the king of the dangers of partiality, which he couches in the most diplomatic of terms:

But that I know your grace for just and wise,  
And might seem partial in this difference  
Enforc'd by nature and by law of arms  
My tongue should plead for young Horatio's right (1.2.166–169).

Hieronimo masks his advice in flattery, yet the self-effacing reference to 'partial' seems to apply as much to the King as it does to his servant. The soon-to-be revenger instructs the judge in legal matters, but to no avail, as a second head of state puts personal ties before impartiality, leading to another miscarriage of justice.

In the Portuguese court, the problem of a judge's emotions influencing their legal decisions is made even more explicit, as Kyd's portrayal of judges begins to form a deliberate pattern. Following the news of Portugal's defeat by Spain, the King of Portugal is distraught at the thought of his son Balthazar's death. When told by Alexandro that Balthazar lives, he feels sure this cannot be, saying: 'They reck no laws that meditate revenge' (1.3.44). The evil Villuppo then steps forward to give a false account of Balthazar's death, contradicting Alexandro's version of events. In the midst

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<sup>18</sup> Coke, *Lord Coke his Speech and Charge* fol. B3<sup>v</sup>.

of his grief, the King convicts the innocent Alexandro without trial on the strength of Villuppo's false accusation (1.3.87). Thus the law is already in crisis before the mainspring of the action, Horatio's murder, has even taken place. As Mukherji notes in relation to her own selection of plays, 'the vision of law that emerges from the drama of the period is one of a peculiarly human and contingent measure'.<sup>19</sup> Three separate monarchs in the first three scenes are shown meting out justice however they deem fit. And in each instance, a failure of impartiality is at the heart of the problem.

In stark contrast to these sovereigns' partiality is Hieronimo's scrupulous methodology. When describing a 'revenge system' in contrast to the law, Richard Posner says revenge has no 'machinery of investigation and adjudication'.<sup>20</sup> *The Spanish Tragedy* challenges this notion by showing the revenger to be more meticulous than the various law-givers. The first piece of evidence Hieronimo receives is a letter from Lorenzo's sister, Bel-imperia, identifying Lorenzo and Balthazar as his son's murderers. But instead of running off, sword in hand, he pauses to look into the facts of the case. His judicial instincts are immediately apparent:<sup>21</sup>

What cause had they Horatio to malign?  
Or what might move thee, Bel-imperia,  
To accuse thy brother, had he been the mean? (3.2.34–36).

The language here is distinctly legal, with 'mean', 'cause', and 'accuse' all imported directly from the courtroom.<sup>22</sup> He wonders about their possible motives, as well as Bel-imperia's motive in accusing her brother. He then goes about finding corroborating evidence: 'I therefore will by circumstances try/What I can gather to confirm this writ' (3.2.48–49). And when another letter does show up, he cross-references the two in exactly the way a prosecutor might today: 'Now may I make compare, 'twixt hers and this,/Of every accident' (3.7.53–54). This piecing together of evidence before proceeding against the culprits is in stark contrast to the instantaneous judgements meted out by the Kings of Spain and Portugal.

<sup>19</sup> Mukherji S., *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: 2006) 234.

<sup>20</sup> Posner R.A., *Law and Literature* 111.

<sup>21</sup> Hutson, *Invention of Suspicion* 279.

<sup>22</sup> Maus K.E. (ed.), *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford: 1995) 339. Cf. Mukherji, on how Othello's line 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul' (5.2.1) relies on the legal resonances of 'cause', *Law and Representation* 6. Later in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo employs the same lexicon: 'For you have given me cause,/Ay, by my faith have you' (4.1.59–60).

In the final scene Hieronimo carries out his revenge, as law and drama are finally brought into communication, and conflict, with one another. It is my contention that although Hieronimo's revenge is a violent one, it retains a deliberately judicious quality. Published in the same decade as *The Spanish Tragedy's* first performance, Lambarde's *Eirenarcha* outlines the purposes of lawful punishment as follows:

first, for the amendment of the offender. Secondly, for examples sake, that others may thereby bee kept from offe[n]ding. Thirdly, for the maintainance of the authoritie and credite of the person that is offended: & these three reasons be common to all such punishments. Seneca rehearseth the fourth finall cause, that is to say, that (wicked men being take[n] away) the good may live in better securitie: and this pertaineth not to all, but to Capital punishments onelie.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Hieronimo eventually kills Lorenzo and Balthazar through the medium of drama, by inviting them to act out a revenge play he has written for the King's entertainment. This has been read as the triumph of art over life.<sup>24</sup> But this play conforms to Lambarde's criteria to a surprising degree. Only the first of his criteria does not work in this respect, since the amendment of the offenders cannot apply *post mortem*. But Lambarde's final reason pertaining to capital punishment supersedes this first. The removal of wicked men from society can certainly be applied to Hieronimo's revenge play, so that 'the good may live in better securitie'. The idea of punishment 'for examples sake' is also highly relevant here. Hieronimo refers to his play as a 'spectacle' not once but twice within the space of twenty-five lines when justifying his actions: 'See here my show, look on this spectacle' (4.4.89; see also 4.4.113). The word 'spectacle', now synonymous with entertainment, was used in early modern England to describe works of an exemplary nature.<sup>25</sup> What could be more exemplary than the divinely-ordained violence of public execution?

Michel Foucault famously characterised the gallows of early modern France as the 'spectacle of the scaffold', and while the applicability of Foucault's theory to an English context has been challenged in recent years,

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<sup>23</sup> Lambarde William, *Eirenarcha, or Of the Office of the Iustices of the Peace* (London, by R. Newbery and H. Bynneman, by the assigns of R. Tottell and C. Barker: 1581) 67. These punishment criteria are also used by Harry Keyishian in "Punishment Theory in the Renaissance: the Law and the Drama", in *Shakespeare and the Law* 175–184, here 175.

<sup>24</sup> Womack P., *English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: 2006) 130.

<sup>25</sup> *OED* cites Wilkinson, 1579: Judas 'should be a notable spectacle of God's vengeance'.



the link between public execution and exemplary spectacle still stands.<sup>26</sup> By applying the word to his own actions, Hieronimo seeks to elevate himself from murderer to executioner, as he conflates stage and scaffold in the climactic play-within-a-play.<sup>27</sup> The public nature of the revenge also serves to accentuate the legal resonances of the denouement. This desire for an audience is not simply the revenger's sadistic and ostentatious need to show off. Hieronimo needs the presence of the Spanish court to witness his drama of retribution. In the prologue to *The Alchemist*, Ben Jonson talks of audience members as 'judging spectators' (Prologue 3).<sup>28</sup> By requiring that his audience judge what they have seen, Hieronimo makes them into unwitting, and unwilling, jurors to his public pronouncement of justice. Having failed to act impartially in the trials they presided over at the play's beginning, the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal are now forced to witness the deaths of their own children through the similarly partial activities of the revenger Hieronimo. While the early modern theatre is not thought of as a place that encourages impartiality, Kyd's play strongly advocates the need for an impartial judiciary when meting out justice to citizens.

Crucially, it is the failure of the legal system that makes revenge so necessary in the first place. I am not suggesting (nor was Kyd) that revenge is a satisfactory alternative to law. Paradoxically, law is both critiqued and reinforced by the events of the play; the dangers that result from a biased legal system are foregrounded, while at the same time it is clear that a fair and equitable legal system is infinitely preferable to vigilante justice.

The dialogue Kyd sets up between revenge and the law was soon to be taken up by other revenge dramatists. I now want to look at how the issue of judicial impartiality continues to be interrogated through the staging of revenge, by turning to scenes of judgement in *Titus Andronicus*, *Antonio's Revenge*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

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<sup>26</sup> See Hutson L., "Rethinking the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold': Juridical Epistemologies and English Revenge Tragedy", *Representations* 89 (2005) 30–58, for the problems inherent in applying Foucault's theory grounded in early modern French practices to the very different legal context of early modern England.

<sup>27</sup> The slippage between stage and scaffold is a common one; in the first edition of James I's *Basiliikon Doron* (Edinburgh, by Robert Waldegrave: 1599) the king is as 'one set on a *scaffold*' but this is then changed to 'stage' for subsequent editions. On this point, see Laqueur W., "Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Execution, 1604–1868", in Beier A.L. – Cannadine D. – Rosenheim J.M. (eds.), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge: 1989) 305–356, here 326.

<sup>28</sup> *The Alchemist* in Campbell G. (ed.), *The Alchemist and other plays* (Oxford: 1995).



'Terras Astraea reliquit: *be you remembered, Marcus, / She's gone, she's fled*'  
(*Titus Andronicus* 4.3.4)<sup>29</sup>

Aristotle said that without laws, man is no better than a beast: 'For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice.'<sup>30</sup> In the 'wilderness of tigers' that is Rome (3.1.54), *Titus Andronicus* stages the anarchy attendant on the abandonment of Justice: '*Terras Astraea reliquit*' (4.3.4).<sup>31</sup> The plot of Shakespeare's early revenge tragedy involves mutilation, decapitation, cannibalism, and rape, with characters therefore showing little concern for legal niceties. But amid the carnage, issues of proof and justice are deeply interrogated by Shakespeare, centring on the figure of the emperor Saturninus, whose tyranny is intimately connected with his failure to judge with impartiality.

As quoted earlier, Lambarde describes the emblem of a judge being 'rightly pourtrayed with wide ears, but without eyes at all, to denote that he ought fully and patiently to heare the whole Cause, but not affectionately to respect any party'.<sup>32</sup> But Saturninus in his role as judge repeatedly shows an unwillingness to listen to the pleas of others.<sup>33</sup> The emperor's brother Bassianus is killed by Aaron the Moor, who then plants evidence to frame two of Titus's sons for the murder (2.2). As in *The Spanish Tragedy*, we find the familiar scenario of a head of state acting as judge in a case where family ties interfere with his capacity to act fairly. When his brother's body is discovered, Saturninus is given a forged letter implicating Titus's two sons. But instead of emulating Hieronimo's forensic methods, comparing hand-writing samples and so forth, he takes the letter at face value and sentences the brothers to death on the spot. Furthermore, Saturninus rejects the spoken word in favour of visual evidence, saying 'If it be proved? You see it is apparent' (2.2.292). He then proceeds to silence the brothers, thus violating their right to defend themselves verbally: 'Let them not speak a word: the guilt is plain' (2.2.301). The only thing that is 'plain' is the lack of due process in Saturninus's court, because

<sup>29</sup> All references taken from Shakespeare William, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J. Bate, Arden Three edition (London: 1995).

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library series (Cambridge: 1932) 1253 a31.

<sup>31</sup> Hieronimo expresses the same concern in *The Spanish Tragedy*: 'For justice is exiled from the earth' (3.13.140).

<sup>32</sup> Lambarde, *Courts of justice* 5.

<sup>33</sup> On this point see also Raffield, "*Terras Astraea reliquit*".

'to judge in a point of difference, hearing but one partie speake, is assuredly to be vnjust'.<sup>34</sup>

After Titus's sons are wrongly sent to their deaths, we see Saturninus judging hastily once more, when he sends a minor character to his death for delivering a letter from Titus. Having read the letter, Saturninus is deaf to the man's pleas for mercy and simply orders his immediate execution: 'Go, take him away and hang him presently!' (4.4.44). The judge's consistent refusal to listen is the antithesis of Lambarde's emblematic judge 'with wide ears', meant to emphasise the need to listen to both parties equally. This is reinforced when Titus begs the tribunes in his sons' trial for mercy, but the judges pass on in silence and his surviving son Lucius must tell his father, 'My gracious lord, no tribune hears you speak' (3.1.32). Saturninus fails in his role as a judge not through malice but through ignorance, again underlining the importance of a judiciary who 'ought fully and patiently to heare the whole Cause, but not affectionately to respect any party'. The partisan conduct presented in Shakespeare's play again has at its core the dangers of partiality within a specifically judicial context. In this way theatre responds perspicuously to early modern legal discourse; Kyd and Shakespeare demonstrate the perils of a justice system that does not act with impartiality, even while they show the alternative to be savagely violent.

As we move into the seventeenth century, the fear of prejudicial judges continues to manifest itself on the early modern stage. Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, roughly contemporary to *Hamlet*, demonstrates the political potential of the genre, and again the law is a central component of this.<sup>35</sup> As a member of the Middle Temple (one of London's Inns of Court), Marston knew plenty about the law. Yet this is rarely mentioned in studies of his revenge play.<sup>36</sup> And it is the figure of the judge that becomes the site for acute observations about the dangers of prerogative powers and abuses within the early modern legal system. Before the play even starts, the evil Duke Piero and his accomplice Strotzo are responsible for a double homicide: firstly the father of the hero Antonio, and secondly Antonio's close friend Feliche. Piero also frames his own daughter

<sup>34</sup> Coke, *Lord Coke his Speech and Charge* fol. C4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> All references taken from Marston John, *Antonio's Revenge*, ed. W.R. Gair (Manchester: 1978). On the vexed question of dating the play, see Finkelpearl P.J., *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in his Social Setting* (London: 1969) Appendix C, 268–271.

<sup>36</sup> Even Finkelpearl treats the play in isolation from Marston's legal training, in *John Marston of the Middle Temple* 150 ff.

Mellida, Antonio's true love, as having been unfaithful to Antonio with Feliche the night before the planned wedding of Antonio and Mellida. Why would Piero make it look like his daughter has been having an affair? Particularly since unchastity receives the death penalty, as Piero tells us himself: 'My lustful daughter dies; start not, she dies./I pursue justice, I love sanctity' (2.2.28–29). Piero professes to love justice, and is willing to sacrifice his daughter to prove it. The most impartial precept in the play, that a love of justice comes before all personal ties, is put in the mouth of the murderer. The reason for Piero's false accusation does not become apparent until 4.2, the courtroom scene.

When the time comes for Mellida to stand trial, Piero again talks loudly of his love for justice. He declares that he will act '[m]ost just and upright in our judgement seat' (4.2.6), evoking Coke's injunction to 'vprihtly Iudge, according to Equitie'.<sup>37</sup> It is within the courtroom that Piero shows his mastery of the law to be second to none, actively manipulating his daughter's trial.<sup>38</sup> Instead of granting Mellida a pardon, Piero pretends to hasten his daughter's execution at first, shouting 'Why stays the doom of death?' (4.3.8). As judge, he acts safe in the knowledge that such summary execution will never be permitted by law. His deputies immediately object with 'Who riseth up to manifest her guilt?' (4.3.9) and 'You must produce apparent proof, my lord' (4.3.10).<sup>39</sup> Piero is well aware that such proof is lacking, thus using the law to shield his daughter even as he calls for her punishment.

Piero stage-manages the scene from start to finish, even calling on Strotzo as chief witness at the appointed time. This is the Duke's masterstroke, as he has coached Strotzo to confess everything – the murder of Antonio's father and the framing of Mellida – and then blame Antonio for putting him up to it. Thus in one movement Piero exonerates his daughter and makes Antonio into Public Enemy Number One. Piero tells Strotzo to give a convincing confession in open court, and he will then put on a show of mercy himself: 'Do it with rare passion, and present thy guilt,/ As if 'twere wrung out with thy conscience gripe' (2.5.4–5). But when Strotzo's performance culminates in an impassioned plea for death, no

<sup>37</sup> Coke, *Lord Coke his Speech and Charge* fol. C3r.

<sup>38</sup> Even Saturninus does not seek to execute Titus's sons wrongfully, but convicts them on the basis of untrustworthy evidence.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Titus Andronicus*: 'If it be proved? You see it is apparent' (2.2.292). The slippage produced by the dual meaning of 'apparent' (both 'obvious' and 'seeming') is used to different ends by both authors in a judicial setting.

mercy is forthcoming from Piero. He proceeds to strangle Strotzo, his chief accomplice and only witness to his crimes, in front of the entire assembly: 'Myself will be thy strangler, unmatched slave' (4.3.64). The ingenuity of Piero having Strotzo primed for his own strangling not only creates a moment of dramatic brilliance, it also underscores how thoroughly he has mastered the legal means at his disposal. Strotzo's confession is followed swiftly by his execution at the hands of his master, who is also the presiding judge.<sup>40</sup> What is made to appear to those onstage as the impartial workings of justice is in fact the highly partial and pre-meditated killing of an accomplice.

Piero's stranglehold on the law means that the hero Antonio is forced to seek justice through extra-legal methods. And so, with the help of Piero's other victims, the evil Duke is dispatched by Antonio not only for his murders, but also for his abuse of the law. The state of Venice is freed from the oppression of tyranny, and Antonio's group is awarded the freedom of the city for murdering the Duke: 'Blest be you all, and may your honours live/Religiously held sacred, even for ever and ever' (5.6.10–11). This reaction has been described as 'morally repulsive', and such a description has some merit in light of Piero's gruesome death.<sup>41</sup> But the play is structured in such a way that no alternative is available to the citizens of Venice, since the primary culprit for a double homicide is himself the guarantor of justice. Marston seems to be suggesting that if a sovereign debases the institution of law, citizens may be forced to take matters into their own hands, which is particularly interesting when we think of the English Civil War just over the horizon. As regards the ideal of an impartial judge, Piero's ability to mimic that ideal – 'Most just and upright in our judgement seat' (4.2.6) – shows just how perilous such a position can become in the wrong hands. The theatre highlights the danger inherent in the fact that the role of judge is exactly that: a role to be played out. In the examples drawn from Kyd and Shakespeare the sovereigns' judgements fell short of the ideal of impartiality; Marston has his antagonist impersonate an impartial judge in order to further his own villainy.

The recurrence of questions of partiality within the genre is not in itself surprising, as revenge relies on personal motivations overruling rational

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<sup>40</sup> Clearly this 'execution' does not adhere strictly to the legal requirements of a murderer's punishment. Nevertheless, death by strangling has a close and deliberate connection with the hangings used to punish murderers in early modern England.

<sup>41</sup> Ayres P.J., "Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*: The Morality of the Revenging Hero", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 12 (1972) 359–372, here 372.

action. What is note-worthy is how often the flawed partiality of the justice system is itself the main-spring of the revenge action onstage. Early modern audiences may have been partial to revenge tragedies, but these plays also ask audiences to recognise how dangerous a lack of impartiality could become within a courtroom environment. Revenge tragedy casts a critical eye on the relation between courtroom justice and citizens' need for reciprocity; rather than glorifying revenge, these plays demonstrate the anarchy attendant on a justice system that fails to judge its citizens fairly and impartially.

A final example of how revenge tragedy engages with an emerging discourse of impartiality comes from Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (c.1607).<sup>42</sup> We do not have to look very far in this play to see the law being abused by those in power, as the evil Duke obliges in the second scene, in yet another courtroom setting. As one of the Duke's own sons later puts it '[a] duke's soft hand strokes the rough head of law,/And makes it lie smooth' (2.3.73–74); again social status is seen to interfere with the proper workings of justice. Here we are shown a fully functional courtroom with judges, officers, and a defendant. The crime in question is the rape of a virtuous lady, and the defendant is Junior Brother, the Duchess' youngest son. When Junior Brother is brought out he is unrepentant, and does not even deny the charges against him. Instead he jokes about the rape in the crassest terms: 'My fault being sport, let me but die in jest' (1.2.66). This is accompanied by the expected condemnation by the presiding judges, who reprove the crime as 'the very core of lust' (1.2.43), and the death penalty would appear to be unavoidable. But when it comes time to pass sentence, the Duchess begs her husband to intercede (1.2.21). The Duke, who is himself a serial rapist, waits until the judge is delivering the 'doom irrevocable' before breaking in to defer judgement until next sitting:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| First Judge: | Confirm'd; this be the doom irrevocable.                             |
| Duchess:     | O!   |
| First Judge: | Tomorrow early –   |
| Duchess:     | Pray be abed, my lord.   |
| First Judge: | Your grace much wrongs yourself.                                     |
| Ambitioso:   | No, 'tis that tongue, Your too much right does do us too much wrong. |
| First Judge: | Let that offender –  |

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<sup>42</sup> All references taken from Middleton Thomas, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. G. Taylor – J. Lavagnino (Oxford: 2007).

Duchess: Live, and be in health.  
 First Judge: Be on a scaffold –  
 Duke: Hold, hold, my Lord.  
 Spurio [*aside*] Pox on't, What makes my dad speak now?  
 Duke: We will defer the judgment till next sitting. (1.2.76–85)

The Duke is well aware of the travesty of justice he is responsible for, as he later admits '[i]t well becomes that judge to nod at crimes/That does commit greater himself and lives' (2.3.122–123). Meanwhile, his wife the Duchess goes one step further, saying he should 'walk/With a bold foot upon the thorny law,/Whose prickles should bow under him' (1.2.103–105). It does not take much to link this to James I, recently placed on the throne of England and whose reign is often discussed in terms of increasing absolutism. James famously clashed with Sir Edward Coke on the question of whether a king was above the law or subject to the law.<sup>43</sup> James argued that the King was qualified to judge any case in a court of law, but Coke disagreed openly with the king, stating that 'the King in his own person cannot adjudge any case [...] but this ought to be determined and adjudged in some Court of Justice, according to the law and custom of England'.<sup>44</sup> This conflict was ultimately about the nature of royal prerogative, and the incident can be seen as a major turning point in the balance of power between monarchy and state judiciary in the slide to civil war.

While the consequences of a sovereign acting above the law are clear to see in seventeenth-century British history, what is less often acknowledged is the long tradition of representing precisely this problem in the revenge tragedies of the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century. By looking beyond the violence of these revenge plays, much can be learned of the socio-legal preoccupations of early modern England. Here it has been my contention that a genre not usually associated with the discourse of impartiality actually has a surprising amount of insight on the dangers of a partial judiciary. The partiality displayed by the sovereigns in these revenge plays, from Kyd to Middleton, amounts to more than generic convention, pre-empting as it does the real-world partisan politics of the civil war era.

As for the Portuguese monarch's claim, 'They reck no laws that meditate revenge' (1.3.44), the imagined antithesis between conscientious law-

<sup>43</sup> See Loveland I., *Constitutional Law, Administrative Law, and Human Rights: A Critical Introduction*, 5th ed. (Oxford: 2009) 87.

<sup>44</sup> Case of Prohibitions (1607), 12 Co Rep 63–64, (available online at the time of writing, at <<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/KB/1607/J23.html>>).

giver and ruthless revenger is deeply complicated in these plays. Instead of standing in as a symbol of law and order as we might expect, judges in revenge tragedy are repeatedly portrayed falling far short of the mark. Despite Coke's admonition that partiality is a turpitude,<sup>45</sup> judges such as the King of Spain, Saturninus, Piero and the Duke of *The Revenger's Tragedy* are all shown bearing a very partial hand in the execution of judgement. The early modern theatre acts as a crucible for many discourses in the period, offering a particularly vibrant place to consider notions of impartiality and partiality. Yet this is not achieved through the representation of ideals of justice, but rather by putting those ideals to the test as revenge, justice, and impartiality intersect and conflict with one another. Such an approach does not allow for easy moralizing or simple answers, instead acting to complicate the history of impartiality through the representation of its opposite.

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<sup>45</sup> Coke, *Lord Coke his Speech and Charge* fol. C3<sup>r</sup>.

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'OUT OF BOOKS AND OUT OF THEMSELVES':  
INVIGORATING IMPARTIALITY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND\*

Nathaniel Stogdill

The English Civil War was fought with cannons and cant. In the early months of the conflict, the prominent poet and Chronologer of the City of London, Francis Quarles, was confounded by the volume of polemic published by competing parties: without 'an Oedipus to reade this Riddle', he complains, he is 'tost and turned as a Weather-cock to [his] own weakness'.<sup>1</sup> As the conflict persisted and partisanship intensified, the production of polemic increased. When the crisis culminated with the execution of King Charles I in 1649, accounts of the event appeared in the pages of the numerous partisan newsbooks that had proliferated in the previous decade as parties competed to report on and interpret the contentious events of the 1640s.

The controversies of the Civil War did not die with the king. But, as England's periodicals competed to interpret the consequences of the king's execution, the glibly-titled newsbook, *A Book Without A Title*, offered itself as a solution to the 'folly of this Nation [...] taken most with [the] highest Titles, and lowest matters' of partisan carping.<sup>2</sup> By renouncing titles in its title, *A Book Without A Title* at once distances itself from the titles of honor and nobility – 'Member of Parliament', 'King' – of political influence as well as the epithets – 'puritan', 'papist', 'rebel', 'royalist' – that were used to attack them. By rejecting both the loyalties and language of political interests, it presents itself as a novel alternative to the polemical name-calling that dominated English print culture in the middle of the seventeenth century: its non-partisan perspective 'may seem strange to some [...] because not usual' but it is 'not so strange as true'. These opening sentences promise a strange reading experience – and a similarly strange type of knowledge – to a nation that had become accustomed to polemical opinion-making. In contrast to the deluding contents of other

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\* I am indebted to Kathryn Murphy, Anita Traninger, and Kelly Whitmer for their keen and generous comments on earlier versions of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Quarles Francis, *The Loyall Convert* (Oxford, Leonard Lichfield: 1643).

<sup>2</sup> [Anon.], *A Book Without A Title* (London, s.n.: 1649) fol. A<sup>r</sup>.

interest-driven newsbooks that articulate and entrench partisan interests, *A Book Without A Title* will 'appear honest to all in speaking truth without fear to every Interest for undeceiving the people, [which others dare not do] though never so prejudicial'.<sup>3</sup> By refusing to be 'taken [...] with highest Titles', it speaks from outside of the biases of 'every interest', overwriting their prejudices with a universal 'truth' that appears 'honest to all'. This act of self-effacement, or dis-entitlement, simultaneously entitles the newsbook with the authority of disinterest.<sup>4</sup> As a solution to the 'folly of this Nation', *A Book Without A Title* offers a strange impartiality as counter-discourse to the familiar and forceful partialities of seventeenth-century England.

But whatever its claims to novelty, *A Book Without A Title* was not alone in its assertions of impartiality. The dramatic events of the 1640s and 1650s polarized a public that was forced to come to terms with the execution of a monarch, the dismantling of the state church, and a fitful experiment with republicanism. The periodical newsbooks that emerged to trace and interpret England's rapidly-changing social landscape sought to distinguish themselves from polemic by advertising their impartiality in their titles: *The Impartiall Intelligencer*, for instance, vied with *Mercurius Impartialis* and *The royal diurnall. Impartially imparting the affaires of England* for interpretive authority in a burgeoning and increasingly partisan news culture. But often the impartiality proclaimed on the cover was precisely that – a cover for the more familiar partisan polemic of their contents: *The Impartiall Intelligencer* consists entirely of the matters and sympathies of Parliament, *Mercurius Impartialis* aims to aid 'his Majesties Subjects [who have] bene Pysoned with Principles of Heresie, Schisme, Faction, [etc.]' and *The royall diurnall* articulates its royalist sympathies even as it promises to 'impartially [impart]'.<sup>5</sup>

Like these newsbooks, whose impartial titles conceal their partisan contents, *A Book Without A Title*'s title-less 'truth' quickly gives way to the

<sup>3</sup> Periodical newsbooks reported the recent noteworthy events – political and otherwise – that had occurred in the days or weeks since the previous issue. The content of *A Book Without A Title* is devoted to relating and commenting on the Act for setting apart a Day of Public Thanksgiving, which was issued on 1 June 1649.

<sup>4</sup> In this respect, *A Book Without A Title* resembles the more modern objective mind described by Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007).

<sup>5</sup> [Anon.], *Mercurius Impartialis* (London, s.n.: December 1648) fol. A<sup>r</sup>; [Anon.], *The royall diurnall. Impartially imparting the affaires of England* (London, s.n.: July–August 1648).

'prejudicial' interestedness it renounces in its opening. When the text first turns to the concerns of the nation's 'weekly Transactions', it presents its contemporary material according to the principles of disinterest outlined in its methodological opening. The text proper begins with a straightforward description of *Act for setting apart a Day of Public Thanksgiving* of 1 June 1649.<sup>6</sup> But what begins as a verbatim account of the act, inclusive of prefatory remarks, is soon replaced by a distinctly partisan commentary on the parliamentary overreaching represented by the act. The text's strange impartiality is ultimately undercut by the more familiar partiality of anti-parliamentary polemic: Parliament is 'so common an Enemy' made up of 'cunning cheats' and 'Caterpillars that devoure all before them' as they 'Delude the people, and enrich themselves with the ruins of the Nation'.<sup>7</sup> As the text proceeds, it alternates between an impartial description of the *Act of Thanksgiving* and a highly partial commentary on it. The rhetorical shift from description to commentary is accompanied by a shift from plain typeface into italics, providing a typographical contrast that both signals and separates partisan opinion-making and impartial relation. Over the course of the newsbook, the italicized opinionating interrupts the plain-faced text of the act, so that, eventually, single clauses set off entire paragraphs of italicized invective. In the end, *A Book Without A Title* appears to be as taken with 'highest Titles, and lowest Matters' as the readers it hopes to undeceive.

In this respect, the disinterest offered by *A Book Without A Title* serves as a platform for, not an answer to, the period's interest-driven discourses. If the impartiality that it imagines at the outset is to be seen as a precursor to modern objectivity, then the rapid departure from it suggests that the initial claim to it was disingenuous. The promise to '[undelude] the people' with an unprejudiced and universal 'Truth' is simply a rhetorical trick meant to appeal to a readership increasingly disaffected with the divisive rhetoric of a decades-long civil conflict. This tactic was not an unusual one. The prominence of claims to 'impartiality' and 'disinterest' in mid-century polemic signals that the posture of impartiality, if not the practice of it, was a popular one. And its prevalence throughout the 1640s

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<sup>6</sup> One of many Acts of Thanksgiving issued in the early months of Interregnum, this act designates two days for solemn reflection on 'the special providence of God in the timely discovery' of a plot to disrupt Cromwell's impending invasion of Ireland. For other newsbook accounts of this act, see Stace M., *Cromwellania: A Chronological Detail of Events in Which Oliver Cromwell Was Engaged, from the Year 1642 to His Death 1658* (London: 1810) 57–59.

<sup>7</sup> *Book Without A Title* 2.

and 1650s suggests that the perceived disingenuousness or contradictions of this rhetorical impartiality did not undermine the desire for it. As with other newsbooks, then, *A Book Without A Title*'s claim to impartiality is apparently nothing more than an advertising ploy meant to increase readership and sales, not to create credibility with a new and strange 'Truth'.

But if the objective is to deceive a credulous readership with a disingenuous show of impartiality, why advertise that disingenuousness with typographical signposts? The aim of disingenuousness, after all, is to conceal, not reveal, contradictory motives. But the repeated shifts between plain and italicized typeface draw attention to the competing interpretive voices that make up the text. Any newsman astute enough to take advantage of the popularity of impartiality among mid-century readers would have been tactful enough to disguise his pandering. And there is evidence that our author was just such a savvy newsman: his exuberant and expansive invective is that of an experienced polemicist, and his detailed account of the wider political, religious, and economic consequences of Parliament's policy-making reveals a sophisticated understanding of England's complex social environment in the months following the regicide. If we cannot dismiss our author as inept or naïve, neither can we so easily dismiss his professed disinterest as disingenuous. But if we accept that he is in earnest about his effort to provide a 'Truth' to '[undelude] the people', we must reconcile this disinterested objective with the distinctly interested content that overtakes the newsbook. The italicized opinionating that fills the pages must be part of, not opposed to, the impartial project. But how can he claim impartiality while using such partial means? What kind of strange impartiality is this that seems so blatantly biased? The more seriously we take *A Book Without A Title*'s impartiality, the less it resembles a precursor to our modern notions of an unbiased objectivity.

As is evident in the range of essays that make up this volume, early notions of impartiality were by no means consistent as the concept was developing in the shifting legal, political, and philosophical discourses of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Nor had it yet taken on the ethical importance that would be assigned to it in the eighteenth century, and to its successor 'objectivity'. As Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger make clear in their introduction, the refusal to be partial – to express an informed preference – was sometimes regarded as a failing of sound judgement, not a prerequisite for it. These two competing epistemological imperatives – to choose and not to choose – converge in mid-seventeenth-century impartialities that emerged in response to the demands for an authoritative voice that could be judicious but not

prejudicial. In his account of impartiality in early modern news culture, for instance, Joad Raymond identifies two competing approaches to news reporting. The first, evident in John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, aims to construct a disinterested truth out of the testimony of innocent witnesses, such as the first-hand accounts of indifferent observers or public records. This 'just the facts' approach squares nicely with the methods of our modern objectivity and informs the practices of 'objective reporting' valued in contemporary journalism. But the second form of impartiality in early modern news is less familiar. As Raymond notes, newsbooks frequently associated their impartiality with 'intelligence'. This held a specific meaning in a news culture that distinguished between 'news', 'intelligence', and 'information': 'news' was technically a relation of any historically new event, 'intelligence' was news shaped by an editor for his audience to understand, and 'information' was an editorialized opinion on the news that was meant to influence a reader's judgement of it.<sup>8</sup>

Rather than constructing impartiality out of the unmediated reports of indifferent witnesses, then, impartial intelligence interprets the news for its readers. This editorial digestion was important for relations of international news, which required contextualization for foreign audiences. Newsbooks like *The Impartiall Intelligencer* provided English readers with the same interpretive guidance for domestic news that, over the course of the 1640s and 1650s, seemed increasingly foreign. The ongoing conflicts and shifting fortunes that characterized the social experience in mid-century England created a social environment that was unpredictable and often incomprehensible. The impartial intelligence that filled newsbooks, therefore, provided the constant explanation necessary to make sense of a nation that seemed increasingly strange with each news cycle. At the same time, the hardened sectarianism that emerged out of the Civil Wars created the impression that this understanding would come not from the indifferent witnesses and public records valued by Rushworth, but through a discovery of the secret interests that motivated sectarian behavior. John Hall, for instance, complains that the nation 'hath not beene more distracted since the beginning of this impious war, then it is at this present', when 'new parties appeare, and new interests are discovered, that we seemed to oreact some wel contrived Romance. In which every page

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of impartiality in English newsbooks, see Joad Raymond's contribution to this volume.

begets a new and handsome impossibility'.<sup>9</sup> Hall's associate, the famous newsman Marchamont Nedham, regards the discovery of these interests as fundamental to understanding social events:

Interest is the true *Zenith* of every State and Person, according to which they may certainly be understood, though cloathed never so much with the most specious disguise of Religion, Justice and Necessity: And Actions are the effects of Interests, from whom they proceed, and to whom they tend naturally as the stone doth downward.<sup>10</sup>

In this respect, Rushworth's uninterpreted sources alone were insufficient to 'undeceive' readers because they could only provide an account of public actions, not the hidden interests that drove them. Intelligence, on the other hand, pulls back the 'specious disguise' of interest by offering an expert opinion that reveals 'the true *Zenith* of every State and Person'. In contradiction to our modern expectations, this impartial intelligence is impartial by virtue of its opinionating.

In *A Book Without A Title*, the two approaches to impartiality – indifferent account and informed interpretation – settle alongside each other. The alternations between describing and commenting on the *Act of Thanksgiving* do not betray disingenuousness, but a movement between different, though not incompatible, impartial methods. In fact, as Joad Raymond notes, the practice of impartiality required a negotiation between the record and the reader, the text and the interpreter, in which '[a]n unmediated document that lies in preparation for the reader to interpret is pitched against the expertise that mediates and documents only its own interpretation'.<sup>11</sup> It was not unusual for this negotiation between uninterpreted text and authoritative interpreter to be staged on the page, as it is in *A Book Without A Title*, with the interpretive interjections in italics. Therefore, what at first seems to be either a misleading or misled promise of impartiality is in fact more fully representative of impartiality and its practices in the period.

But however it was designed to speak 'truth without fear to every Interest', the interpretive impartiality evident in *A Book Without A Title* was nonetheless implicated in the partisanship it claimed to overcome. In a period of pronounced social conflict, impartiality's informed opinion-making

<sup>9</sup> Hall John, *A true account and character of the times* (London, s.n.: 1647) fol. a1 r.

<sup>10</sup> [Nedham Marchamont], *The Case Stated Between England and the United Provinces* (London, Thomas Newcomb: 1652) 23.

<sup>11</sup> See Raymond's contribution in this volume: "Exporting Impartiality" 149.

closely resembled polemical opinion-making and received similar scrutiny: even as royalist, parliamentarian, and radical newsbooks claimed 'impartiality' on their covers, they nonetheless inveighed against the invidious 'Neutrall' whom they accused of feigning political disinterest. 'Neutral' (Lat. *ne+uter*, 'not either'), is etymologically similar to 'impartial' (Lat. *in+pars*, 'against party'), and the two terms share the meaning in the period of not inclining towards a person or party. But 'neuter' and 'neutral' could also mean to occupy a middle ground between, or serve as an alternative to, two extremes. In this sense, to be 'neutral' was not to avoid taking a position, but to establish a new position, as the grammatical 'neuter' is an alternative to, not a negation of, masculine and feminine gender. Over the course of the seventeenth century, 'impartial' also takes on a similar second meaning that indicates that something is 'not partial' in the sense that it is 'complete'. 'Impartial', then, could indicate both a negation of 'parts' or a consolidation of 'parts'. In the aftermath of the Civil Wars, inherent to the words 'neutral' and 'impartial' was the double function of rejecting prevalent opinions and asserting alternatives to them, behaviours closely identified with partisanship in the period. In his 1659 pamphlet *Interest will not Lie*, Marchamont Nedham names the 'Neuter' alongside the papist, the royalist, the army, and Parliament as the principle interests in Interregnum England. Impartiality, in all its different manifestations, was regarded as a participant in, not an arbiter of, partisanship.

'Impartiality' in mid-century England thus both expressed and undermined the impulse to step out of the divisive influences of 'interest'. In order to understand how contemporaries responded to the dilemmas of an impartiality in conflict with itself, I would like to focus on Abraham Cowley, whose career was imperiled by an infamous posture of impartiality. As a royalist spy, polemicist, poet, and natural philosopher, Cowley actively engaged in the different debates in which impartiality was invoked. In these various roles, he witnessed first-hand the period's politicization of non-partisanship. His Interregnum and Restoration writings reveal an urge to reject this politicization and reconsider the principles and practices of an impartiality that was infringed upon by politics. In his infamous digression on the role of poets in a 'warlike, various, and a tragical age' in the preface to the 1656 edition of his *Poems*, he urges his contemporaries:

we must march out of our Cause it self, and dismantle that, as well as our Towns and Castles, of all the Works and Fortifications of Wit and Reason



by which we defended it [...]. The Names of Party, and Titles of Division, which are sometimes in effect the whole quarrel, should be extinguished and forbidden in peace under the notion of Acts of Hostility.<sup>12</sup>

Like *A Book Without A Title*, Cowley urges the advantages of abandoning the names and titles that make up partisan quarreling. But his contemporaries, schooled in insincerity on this point, were quick to interpret his comments from within the partisan frameworks he encourages them to abandon: Charles II's advisors, led by Edward Hyde, later first earl of Clarendon, pointed to the passage as evidence that Cowley was operating as a double-agent for the Commonwealth, while his biographer and friend, Thomas Sprat, argued that it was a form of subterfuge used to deflect attention from his activities as a spy for the monarchy. But Cowley resisted the political motivations that his contemporaries assigned. Urged by his friends to apologize to an incensed Charles, Cowley reluctantly owned that he may have miscalculated the reception of these few lines, but he did not apologize for urging an end to 'causes':

But though I am fully satisfied in conscience of the uprightness of my own sense in those [two] or three lines which have been received in one so contrary to it, and though I am sure all my actions and conversation in England have commented upon them according to that sense of mine, and not according to the interpretations of others, yet because it seems they are capable of being understood otherwise than I meant them, I am willing to acknowledge and repent them as an error [...].<sup>13</sup>

This is, at best, a half-hearted apology. His confession is qualified by a dense series of adverbial clauses, beneath which the error is finally contingent on the imprecision of language, not his intent. This evasiveness was not lost on Charles, who denied Cowley his promised post in the restored government. After a series of failed suits, Cowley permanently retired to a country estate outside of London near Chertsey in what was seen to represent a final, disaffected abandonment of a frustrating political career.

Cowley's retirement is frequently understood in terms of political disappointment. Critics regard his retreat from London as a distinctly royalist retreat from public life that was not uncommon in the early years of the Restoration as disaffected exiles sought to recuperate their estates and standing in a political environment that urged them to ignore their

<sup>12</sup> Cowley Abraham, *Poems* (London, Thomas Newcomb for Humphrey Moseley: 1656) fol. a4<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Nethercot A., *Abraham Cowley: The Muse's Hannibal* (London: 1931) 189.



losses. But I invite us to consider that this retreat was less partisanly specific than has been understood, that his absence from the main arenas of public ambition was instead a deliberate attempt to explore the possibilities of creating and maintaining an authority disaffiliated from the period's customary political, religious, and intellectual interests. But this disaffiliation is not that of the Stoic indifferent who is invested in his determined disinvestment. Cowley understood how easily the impartial posture could be perceived as a partisan posture, and he did not march out of causes to occupy new ones. So, rather than urging the authority of impartiality against partisanship – and in doing so, contributing to the interested behaviour he hoped to correct – he instead imagines a disinterest that undermines the period's prevalent interests not by contradicting them, but by eschewing them. Cowley rejects interest by rejecting its certainty, its rigidity, its entrenchedness, and offering an alternative in an impartiality that is not a position, but a constant depositioning. He reasserts his investment in this moving disinterest in different discursive contexts throughout his career, envisioning an invigorated impartiality that avoids established positions and objectives by engaging with and disengaging from different competing positions. By reconceiving impartiality as a process rather than a position, Cowley dislocates it from the embedded partialities of individuals, institutions, and ideologies, and relocates it in the changing relationships between them.

Cowley explores the authority of shifting at a time when English authorities were themselves shifting. The execution of the king and dismantling of the state church in the aftermath of the Civil War marked the failure of England's traditional sources of social authority to meet the demands of a shifting cultural landscape. The Commonwealth's many false starts vividly displayed the vulnerability of the republican authority that sought to replace them. No single authority was definitive, as the fortunes of England's various interests seemed to shift with each week's events. Claims to authority were sites of contest, not stability, as competing polemicists continually undercut each other's credibility, reducing 'certainty' to a rhetorical trick. English society seemed to be in flux: Albertus Warren, who supported the king throughout the Civil War but advocated for 'reforming' after the regicide, describes the Interregnum experience as being caught in a 'torrent of nimble dayes'.<sup>14</sup> Rather than investing in England's various

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<sup>14</sup> Warren Albertus, *The Royalist Reform'd* (London, Francis Leach for George Thompson: 1650) 19.

interests, whose fortunes shifted in these 'nimble dayes', Cowley concedes to the torrent that unsettled them, embracing the apparent certainty of constant change over an imperiled constancy against change. He advocates for this de-positioning throughout his works, finding in the experimentation of the New Philosophy, the 'verses' or 'turnings' of lyric poetry, and the 'attempts' of the essay fit arenas for exploring movement as a means of creating, not simply eschewing, social and intellectual authorities.

In the first months of his retirement, Cowley published a piece of advice to the self-proclaimed 'uninterested men' of the newly chartered Royal Society, who sought to pursue the 'Improvement of Natural Knowledge' above the influence of the period's many interests.<sup>15</sup> His treatise, *A Proposition for the Advancement of Learning*, provides detailed instructions for establishing an academy devoted to the practice and advancement of the New Science and experimental philosophy. Cowley's college, as he imagines it, is not a detached, theoretical exercise: he envisions his proposition to be a practical alternative to Francis Bacon's Salomon's House, the experimental institution described in *New Atlantis* (1626), which Cowley deemed a 'Project for Experiments that can never be Experimented'.<sup>16</sup> According to Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, which was written soon after the establishment of the Royal Society and provided both a history of and defense for its formation, the charter members of the Society found Cowley's proposal 'every way practicable' and used it as a model for their own constitution.<sup>17</sup> The *Proposition* seeks to establish the practice of empirical philosophy as a process in which its practitioners continually unsettle themselves in order to respond to the complexity and change intrinsic in the world that they observe. Although his plan appropriates some of the characteristics of Salomon's House – the scope of its enquiries, the stationing of fellows abroad, frequent formal meetings – Cowley is interested in moving beyond the inert impracticability of Bacon's ideal and enacting an academy fit for the pursuit of a fundamentally active form of knowledge. Incessant activity is essential to Cowley's vision of an empirical science that is continually investigating and experimenting. He therefore incorporates a fundamental instability into

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<sup>15</sup> Sprat, for instance, appeals to these 'uninterested men' in Sprat Thomas, *History of the Royal-Society of London, For the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London, Thomas Rycroft for John Martyn: 1667) 54.

<sup>16</sup> Cowley Abraham, *A Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy* (London, J. Macock for Henry Herringman: 1661) 28.

<sup>17</sup> Sprat, *History of the Royal-Society* 59.

his academy's infrastructure in order to accommodate and enhance the intellectual activity of its members. In his "Preface", he deplores 'unactive contemplation' and sets forth a constitution designed to move members 'out of books and out of themselves'.<sup>18</sup> Fellows meet compulsorily: they continually dine together and gather at assemblies, where they investigate each other's ideas and experiments and repeatedly recalibrate their understanding of natural philosophy. This structural self-interrogation prevents the establishment of a settled consensus on any issue by forcing fellows to investigate their own certainty as rigorously as they investigate nature. The accomplishments and discoveries of individual members are depersonalized and credit is distributed throughout the community through an exhaustive process of replication and validation that prevents single members from achieving a disproportionate amount of authority over their colleagues.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the register of all successful experiments is locked away, inaccessible to all but the fellows. Students enrolled in the college are instead instructed in a series of failed experiments. This pedagogy of errors interrupts the influence of any tentatively validated ideas and focuses the empirical methodology on a process of discovering rather than on the objects of discovery. Destabilization is systematic in Cowley's design. His academy incorporates change, mandating a structural motion that facilitates the intellectual movement of its members.

Cowley ends the *Proposition* by emphasizing that his academy's greatest advantage is its 'indifference': its aims do not 'enterfere with any parties in State or Religion' and, if administered according to his design, it 'can hardly be conceived capable (as many good Institutions have done) even of Degeneration into any thing harmful'.<sup>20</sup> In order to succeed, his academy men must do what his contemporaries had failed to do in 1656: march out of their causes. Therefore, in order to ensure that partisan interests do not interfere with the operations of the academy, he prohibits his members any strong social affiliation that might predispose their opinions: he disallows divines, lawyers, and even married men from entering into the academy.

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<sup>18</sup> Cowley, *Proposition* fols. A5<sup>r-v</sup>; A6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Cowley instructs that 'if any one find out anything which he conceives to be of consequence, he shall communicate it to the Assembly to be examined, experimented, approved or rejected' (Cowley, *Proposition* 36). These weekly conferences diminish the authority of 'any one' scholar by placing what 'he conceives to be of consequence' against the authority of the assembly to approve or reject it.

<sup>20</sup> Cowley, *Proposition* fol. D6<sup>r</sup>.

Cowley's manoeuvres to secure this 'indifference' were not without warrant. As he wrote the *Proposition*, the newly chartered Royal Society was moving quickly to establish itself as a public body in the unstable social environment of the early Restoration: a constitution was drafted and adopted in order to furnish a corporate infrastructure, Sprat's *History* was commissioned in order to advertise the group's objectives to a sceptical public, and the busy secretary, Henry Oldenburg, expanded his correspondence in order to enhance and secure an international reputation. The Society also sought to authorize itself by affiliating with groups that already had social standing: they obtained their own 'title' through a public endorsement from the newly-restored Charles II, sought out aristocratic members with well-established reputations and fortunes, and preferred members with established professional practices – like physicians – over informal practitioners – like alchemists – who were more isolated in their work. Consequently, as the Society sought to affiliate itself, it seemed to have affiliations. The 'disinterest' claimed by practitioners of the New Science was viewed with the same suspicion as the impartiality advertised in newsbooks, and was subject to politicization on both sides. Michael Hunter observes that conservatives inveighed against 'Cromwell, Fanaticks, the Royal Society, & New Philosophy' while simultaneously disaffected reformists 'could not endure to heare well of any Royall Act, or Royall Society'.<sup>21</sup> The Society hoped that by expanding and entrenching itself in Restoration society it would begin to accrue the social authority to pursue and assert its own interests. By the time he published his *History*, the Royal Society had come to be categorized alongside political parties, and Sprat felt it necessary to justify why his intentionally 'plain' history at times appears to veer into polemic: 'The Style perhaps in which it is written, is larger and more contentious than becomes that purity and shortness [...] of Historical Writing', he complains, but the blame for this contentiousness rests with the Society's detractors, whose 'Objections and Cavils against it, did make it necessary for me to write of it, not altogether in the way of a plain History, but sometimes of an *Apology*'.<sup>22</sup> However

<sup>21</sup> Letter from John Wallis to Henry Oldenburg, 16 July 1669 in Hall A.R. – Hall M.B. (eds. and trans.), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, 13 vols. (Madison, WI: 1965–1986) vol. VI, 129; letter from John Beale to John Evelyn, 24 May 1666, held at Christ Church, Oxford, in the Evelyn Collection, Correspondence, no. 52. Both quoted in Hunter M., *Establishing the New Science* (Woodbridge: 1998) 60.

<sup>22</sup> Sprat Thomas, "An Advertisement to the Reader", in *History of the Royal-Society* fol. B4<sup>v</sup>.

reluctant he is to engage with the 'highest Titles, and lowest matters' of political concerns, Sprat's first characterization of the Royal Society is nonetheless a polemical one.

The strategy of responding to the anxiety of instability by building more securely was distasteful to Cowley, who had come to regard stabilized institutions as impractical authorities in an age of cultural change. The perceived interested disinterest of the Royal Society helps us understand Cowley's conspicuous absence from its membership rolls. Cowley was considered for membership soon after the 'Philosophical College' of experimentalists gathered in Oxford relocated to their London headquarters at Gresham, and appears on a list of tentative members that circulated soon after the Society received its initial charter. He was quickly proposed for, and elected to, membership in March of the following year. But this is where his affiliation ends: despite his election, there is no record that Cowley was ever officially admitted or that he attended any meetings. When a list of the Society's fellows was presented to Charles II at the granting of the second charter in 1663, Cowley's name was not included. Though he was an early advocate for and continued to encourage the Society's ideal of 'indifference', Cowley's objective was to march out of the causes that the Royal Society deliberately marched into. We can understand his absence in terms of a fundamental disagreement over how best to cope with and respond to social instability: while the Society sought to establish an impartial authority and secure itself against uncertainty, Cowley is interested in conceding to and adapting in the 'torrent of nimble dayes' in which he is caught.

Cowley's most direct handling of the New Society's endeavours is in the Pindaric mode, a poetic form that allowed him to simultaneously praise and unsettle notions of 'indifference'. His collection of Pindaric imitations, most of which appear as a section of the 1656 edition of *Poems* that contains his controversial statement about marching out of causes and extinguishing names, includes odes that celebrate Francis Bacon, William Harvey, Thomas Hobbes, Dr Charles Scarborough, and the philosophical innovations of the Royal Society. The Pindaric ode was a fit form for imagining an experimental philosophy that achieved indifference through elusiveness: Horace's description of Pindar as a poet who disregards convention like an overcharged river that swells above its banks allowed Cowley to represent an innovative and invigorated philosophy that exceeded the artificial restrictions of previous schools, and Pindar's preoccupation with πόνος or struggle as ethical exercise affirmed the empiricism of the

experimental methodology.<sup>23</sup> For Cowley, the Pindaric mode imitated the movement of its subject and incited movement in its readers, expressing at once the methods and objectives of a new philosophy that prioritized the process of discovery as much as the discovery itself.

Cowley's "Ode to the Royal Society", which was first published as part of Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, praises the Society as the intellectually incessant academy imagined in *A Proposition for the Advancement of Learning*. The ode opens with an indictment of previous thinkers whose negligence and ambition have caused them to restrain rather than advance the philosophy that they have inherited. Until the intellectual innovations of the New Science, philosophy has been 'kept in nonage' by ineffectual guardians who '[w]ould ne'er consent to set him free,/Or his own natural powers to let him see,/Lest that should put an end to their authority'.<sup>24</sup> Like other advocates of the New Science, Cowley likens the intellectual inertia of previous philosophical authorities to physical immobility: their 'captived philosophy' is fed 'desserts of poetry' rather than 'solid meats to increase his force' and in place of 'vigorous exercise', is led 'into the pleasant labyrinths of ever fresh discourse'.<sup>25</sup> The stewards of philosophy who preceded the Royal Society's 'disinterested men' are agents of the same 'unactive contemplation' that is disparaged in the preface to the *Proposition*. Rather than supplying a rigorously active way of knowing, these philosophers provide a scarecrow authority that lacks substance or usefulness:

[...] that monstrous god which stood  
In midst of th' orchard, and the whole did claim,  
Which, with an useless scythe of wood,  
And something else not worth a name  
(Both vast for show, yet neither fit  
Or to defend, or to beget:  
Ridiculous and senseless terrors!) made  
Children and superstitious men afraid.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Horace's characterization of Pindar appears in the opening stanzas of Ode IV, 2. For the importance of Pindar's odes as a source for imagining social athleticism, see Stogdill N., "Abraham Cowley's 'Pindaric Way': Adapting Athleticism in Interregnum England", *English Literary Renaissance* 42.3 (2012) 482–514.

<sup>24</sup> Cowley A., "Ode to the Royal Society", in Sprat, *History of the Royal-Society* fols. B1r–B3v, ll. 8, 16–18.

<sup>25</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 34, 22–24. For more on Cowley's rhetorical debt to Bacon, see Guibbory A., "Imitation and Originality: Cowley and Bacon's vision of Progress", *Studies in English Literature* 29 (1989) 99–120.

<sup>26</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 50–57.

This inactive authority's oversized scythe and phallus are meant for display, not function, and are therefore 'useless' reproductive tools. Cowley contrasts the uselessness of this 'monstrous god' with the liveliness of a Royal Society concerned with that which is 'practicable'. Guided by the principles of empiricism, the practitioners of the New Science join those 'few exalted Spirits' who practice an active form of knowledge creation in which they 'labored to assert the liberty' of an otherwise 'captivated philosophy'.<sup>27</sup>

Although the *Proposition* dismisses Bacon's Salomon's House as an impractical 'Project for Experiments that can never be Experimented', the "Ode to the Royal Society" praises Bacon for his moving philosophy. As 'a mighty man', Bacon expresses the unfettered force that Cowley imitates and praises in his Pindaric poetry: he 'boldly' rebels, fights, frees, breaks, seeks, and discovers. Like a Pindaric tide that overwhelms its 'artificial banks', Bacon's energized intellect 'broke that scarecrow deity' that had imprisoned minds with its specious shows of usefulness, so that the 'orchard's open now and free'.<sup>28</sup> As an emblem of his active philosophy, Bacon does not replace this 'monstrous god' with his own scarecrow authority. Rather, he replaces its certainty with uncertainty, its boastful body with a fluid inquisitiveness that recalls the pedagogy of errors that is central to Cowley's academy in the *Proposition*. Philosophy, under the supervision of Bacon and his methods, remains unsettled after it undermines the enervated authority of his predecessors. This new philosophy is advanced through the technique of intellectual self-denial that Bacon advocates in his famous rejection of the mind's idols: Cowley's Bacon is wary of 'Th'ideas and the images which lie/In his own fancy' and substitutes an ongoing process of inquiry that consists of '[e]ach judgment of his eye, and motion of his hand'.<sup>29</sup> As Bacon's methodology moves him out of the apparent certainty of his own ideas, so does his new philosophy move beyond the ideas it creates. As a philosophy that is continually moving, it is also continually incomplete. And so, Bacon cannot preside over the culmination of an ever-advancing philosophy: 'But life did never to one man allow/Time to discover worlds, and conquer too;/Nor can so short a line sufficient be/To fathom the vast depths of nature's sea'.<sup>30</sup> This incessant process of discovery proceeds beyond its origin in Bacon, who

<sup>27</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 32.

<sup>28</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 58–59.

<sup>29</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 83–84, 88.

<sup>30</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 99–102.



can only instigate, not complete, the advancement of learning that he advocates. This 'mighty man' is finally an intellectual Moses, who, 'from the mountain's top of his exalted wit', is able to see and share, but never inhabit, the philosophical promised land that he discovers.

Cowley praises Bacon not for his philosophical discoveries, but for setting philosophy in motion. Insofar as he instigated a disruptive philosophy that flowed with Pindaric force, he is a model for the invigorated inquiry of the Royal Society. When Cowley praises contemporary practitioners of the New Science, it is for following Bacon's example and learning to act, not simply think, according to the principles of their invigorated philosophy. They, like Pindaric athletes and the socially unencumbered Bacon, are masters of movement. Hobbes, for instance, manifests a *'Living Soul'* in both his books and person that undermines any *'universal Intellectual reign'* and overwhelms *'Vast Bodies of Philosophie'* that *'all are Bodies Dead,/Or Bodies by Art fashioned'*.<sup>31</sup> The empirical philosophy that Hobbes represents is a lithe and lively alternative to the vast, dead, and artificial bodies of knowledge spun out by schoolmen. Its value is in its ability to eschew the stagnation of a *'universal Intellectual reign'* by actively observing a complex and changing world. In his ode *"Upon Dr. Harvey"*, Cowley celebrates Harvey for embodying the characteristics of the fluid circulation that he studies. Harvey's nature is an ever-moving *'Coy Nature'* that he pursues, like Apollo pursuing Daphne.<sup>32</sup> But whereas Apollo's chase ends with Daphne's transformation into a tree, Harvey *'stopt not so'*, following his elusive nature into the bark and *'through all the moving wood'*, until she flees into *'the winding streams of blood'*, where he *'held this slippery Proteus in a chain'* until she discovered *'all her mighty Mysteries'*.<sup>33</sup> Harvey's discoveries are achieved insofar as he adopts the incessant movement distinctive to Pindaric poetry: like a rushing flood, he moves through the boundaries established by bark and the *'wall impervious between [that]/Divides the very Parts within [man]'*, and like an adroit wrestler he struggles with a *'slippery Proteus'* who only reveals his mysteries in an ongoing process of wrangling.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cowley Abraham, *"To Mr. Hobs."*, in *Pindarique Odes*, in *Poems* 26–29 (separate pagination), ll. 1–4, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Cowley Abraham, *"Upon Dr. Harvey"*, in *Verses Written Upon Several Occasions*, in *Works* (London, by J.M. for Henry Herringman: 1668) 12–14 (separately paginated), l. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Cowley, *"Upon Dr. Harvey"* ll. 9–10, 33–34.

<sup>34</sup> Cowley, *"Upon Dr. Harvey"* ll. 28–29.



Bacon, Hobbes, and Harvey succeed as 'uninterested men' insofar as they 'stopt not so'. But Cowley's lament in the controversial preface to his 1656 *Poems* that a 'warlike, various, and tragical age is best to write of, but worst to write in' reveals his concern that the intrusions of partisanship were inevitable in a social environment overwrought with the demands of competing interests. The constant deposition necessary for disinterested behaviour was imperiled by the pressures of different social contingencies and contexts that demanded the taking of positions. And as Cowley was aware that the active philosophy he imagines in the *Proposition* was vulnerable to the infringements of social controversies, so is he sensitive to Bacon's own struggle to keep off the trappings of partisanship. While Bacon's philosophy may not 'enterfere with any parties in State or Religion', these parties nonetheless interfered with him. Bacon's failure to avoid engaging with the different social interests of his age undercut his philosophical potential:

[It] were unjust if we should more require  
 From his few years, divided 'twixt th' Excess  
 Of low Affliction and high Happiness:  
 For who on things remote can fix his sight,  
 That's always in a Triumph, or a Fight?<sup>35</sup>

Subject to the triumphs and fights of partisan controversies that both raised him to Lord Chancellor and peerage and then sank him to public disgrace and imprisonment, Bacon was variously in and out of favour at court and could not avoid the '[d]egeneration into any thing harmful' that Cowley hopes his academy can avoid by excluding otherwise interested men. Cowley's own 'warlike, various, and tragical age' confronted contemporary philosophers with the same challenges: Harvey's boundless rigour, which Cowley celebrates throughout the opening stanzas of the ode, is held in check by intervening concerns of a 'barb'rous Wars unlearned Rage'.<sup>36</sup> In their failures to imitate in their social behaviour the intellectual movement they achieve in their intellectual endeavours, Bacon and Harvey signal to subsequent generations of would-be 'uninterested men' the liabilities of abandoning free-flowing intellectual movement for the contested positions of social controversy.

In contrast to these socially-encumbered intellects, however, Cowley's ode to Charles Scarborough celebrates an athletic intellect similar to that

<sup>35</sup> Cowley, "Ode to the Royal Society" ll. 104–108.

<sup>36</sup> Cowley, "Upon Dr. Harvey" l. 76.

of Harvey's, but which is also adept at managing the social confusion and complexity of mid-century England. "*To Dr. Scarborough*" situates its hero in a fluid Civil War environment in which '*Slaughter all the while/Seem'd like its [England's] Sea, to embrace round the Isle,/With Tempests, and red waves, Noise, and Affright[.]*'<sup>37</sup> Scarborough, who avoided taking up arms in order to train in and practice medicine during the Civil War, manages the flux of social upheaval by adapting the active methodology of his science into an active form of social engagement:

The cruel *Stone* that restless pain  
That's sometimes *roll'd away* in vain,  
But still, like *Sisyphus his stone*, returns again,  
Thou *break'st* and *meltest* by learn'd *Juyces* force,  
(A greater work, though short the way appear,  
Then *Hannibals* by *Vinegar*)  
Oppressed *Natures* necessary course  
It stops in vain, like *Moses*, Thou  
Strik'st but the *Rock*, and straight the *Waters* freely flow.<sup>38</sup>

Like Sisyphus and his rock, Hannibal in the Alps, and Moses in the wilderness, Scarborough encounters his own stony obstacles in the ailments of his patients and the stark cruelty of the Civil War. But whereas Sisyphus futilely forces a stone that stubbornly 'returns again', Scarborough seeks a solution in fluidity: like Hannibal demolishing Alpine boulders with vinegar, or Moses drawing water from desert rocks, Scarborough applies his 'learn'd *Juyces* force' and melts his patients' – and England's – 'cruel stone'. Scarborough is celebrated for taking on the fluid characteristics of his social environment. Unlike Bacon, who was 'always in a triumph or a fight', he cures England by acting as a liquid force that breaks the solid impediments that cause physical and social pain.

Scarborough freely flows, rather than righteously resists, and his effectiveness as a new Moses in his nation's desperate times argues for the political advantages of resituating authority in the management of movement rather than entrenched partisan positions. When Cowley celebrated the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, he praised Charles II as a Scarborough-like figure who rescues mid-century England from its apparent chaos by engaging with its disruptiveness. The ode emphasizes the tempestuousness of the social environment to which Charles II returns:

<sup>37</sup> Cowley Abraham, "*To Dr. Scarborough*", in *Pindarique Odes*, in *Poems* 35–38 (separate pagination), ll. 4–5.

<sup>38</sup> Cowley, "*To Dr. Scarborough*" ll. 34–42.

Peace, he acknowledges, may be reluctant to 'trust that *Sea*, where she can hardly say, / Sh'has known these twenty years one *calmy day*' and Justice may hesitate '[l]est as a *Tempest* carried [Cromwell] away, / Some *Hurican* should bring him back again'.<sup>39</sup> But rather than stabilizing this volatile fluidity and restoring the security of 'calmy [days]', Charles reinscribes Peace and Justice in the tempestuousness of his return: situated in the rush of prosperity, '[w]ith a full Tide to very Port they flow, / With a warm fruitful *wind* o'er all the *Country* blow'.<sup>40</sup> Like God creating out of chaos, Charles returns as a 'sacred force' who works with beauty and speed: 'Already was the *shaken Nation* / Into a wild and deform'd *Chaos* brought' until '[l]oe, the blest *Spirit* mov'd, and *there was Light*' in which could be seen '[t]he *beauteous Work of Order* moving on'.<sup>41</sup> Like Scarborough's curative flow, which opens up nature's course, Charles's reordering is accomplished by a continuous 'moving on'. As a political event, the Restoration reconstitutes England by maintaining the momentum of the previous decades' wild chaos. Even Parliament, which seemed to have legislated its own obsolescent stasis by negotiating 'a firmly settled *Peace* [that] / May shortly make your publick labours cease', is pulled along by this 'moving on' so that it becomes not the Long, but the '*Endless Parliament*'.<sup>42</sup> The ode offers a hopeful vision of the Restoration as an unsettled settlement in which the king, the Parliament, and the people are moving together.

Cowley's career has been measured in absences. For a figure so active in the social disputes that characterize the period, he is repeatedly removed from the main stages of those conflicts. His absence from England during the Civil Wars subjected him to suspicions that his commitment to the king's cause was only half-hearted. His absence from this absence exposed him to further suspicion, as his return to England in 1654 prompted reports that he was operating as a double-agent for the Commonwealth. He was once again absent for Charles's triumphant arrival in London, and the celebratory ode he had composed for the occasion was overshadowed by Edmund Waller's, which had been presented one day earlier. His absence from London and the Restoration court was seen to announce a final, disaffected abandonment of his public ambitions. But rather than reading these absences as indicators of political failure, we

<sup>39</sup> Cowley Abraham, *Ode Upon The Blessed Restoration and Returne of His Sacred Majestie, Charls the Second* (London, for Henry Herringman: 1660) ll. 42–43, 64–66.

<sup>40</sup> Cowley, *Ode Upon The Blessed Restoration* ll. 80–81.

<sup>41</sup> Cowley, *Ode Upon The Blessed Restoration* ll. 124–133.

<sup>42</sup> Cowley, *Ode Upon The Blessed Restoration* ll. 435–436, 440.

should read them as responses to the failures of a public discourse that had privileged partisanship throughout his political career. In his Restoration essay, "Of Liberty", Cowley complains about a society that has exchanged its empowering momentum for the 'perpetual constraint' of social conformity.<sup>43</sup> In the accompanying ode "Upon Liberty", Cowley imagines his retreat to Chertsey as a continuation of the Pindaric 'moving on' that he envisions in the Restoration ode:

The more Heroick strain let others take,  
Mine the Pindaric way I'll make.  
The Matter shall be grave, the Numbers loose and free.  
It shall not keep one settled pace of Time,  
In the same Tune it shall not always chime,  
Nor shall each day just to his neighbour Rhime;  
A thousand Liberties it shall dispense,  
And yet shall manage all without offence,  
Or to the sweetness of the Sound, or greatness of the Sense.<sup>44</sup>

Cowley finds an alternative to the restrictive 'Custom, Business, Crowds, and formal Decencie' in the invigorated indifference of a 'thousand liberties' that manages 'all without offence' by refusing to rhyme with its neighbours or keep 'one settled pace'. In his absences, Cowley imagined and enacted an impartial identity that was constantly unsettling and resituating itself in order to identify the complex and elusive significances of a constantly shifting culture in which the best claim to authority was not to claim it at all. In his absence from the 'lowest matters' of interested pursuits that filled newsbooks, he, like his ideal natural philosopher, was able to occupy an impartial demeanour 'out of books and out of [himself]'.

In seeking to abandon the 'Names of Party, and Titles of Division', Cowley joins *A Book Without A Title* in seeking to establish an authority outside of the influence of seventeenth-century England's many parties. But for Cowley, this disentangling from the period's interests is not as simple as being 'without' or 'against' partiality. *A Book Without A Title's* impartialities – indifferent report and expert opinions – exhibit what Cowley saw as the limitations of impartiality as he found it in the political and religious discourses of the period. The controversy surrounding the Royal Society's 'uninterested men', like that following his own urgings to abandon causes, demonstrated how easily standing against causes could be construed as

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<sup>43</sup> Cowley A., "Of Liberty" in *Several Discourses by way of Essays*, in *Works* 79–91 (separately paginated), here 81.

<sup>44</sup> Cowley, "Upon Liberty" 113–122.

an interested stance. These controversies were, in part, a result of the rhetoric of impartiality: by engaging in partisan debates, it seemed to be a participant in those debates. But the perception of partiality was also dictated by how it was practised: insofar as it opposed interests, it became an opponent to those interests. Like Sisyphus' stone, the partialities of seventeenth-century England incessantly forced themselves upon those who pushed against them. Cowley, however, envisions an alternative in an impartiality that achieves its authority by '[marching] out of' rather than striving against England's competing causes.

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THE LANGUAGE OF IMPARTIALITY  
AND PARTY-POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN ENGLAND,  
1680–1745

Christine Gerrard

The terms ‘impartiality’ and, more particularly, ‘impartial’, play an important, if curiously under-researched role in party-political discourse during the period 1680–1745. This is the period that witnessed the birth of political parties in England, following the bitter ideological divisions of the English Civil War and the restored monarchy of Charles II in 1660. Charles’ royalist supporters in Parliament became known as ‘Tories’ and their opponents, who attacked absolutist rule and the succession of Charles’s Catholic brother James, were dubbed ‘Whigs’. Both labels originally derived from insults hurled at one party by the other. The term ‘party’ itself had negative connotations during this period, and both Whigs and Tories made strenuous efforts to demonstrate that they were not a ‘political party’ but represented the interests of the nation at large. Recent studies of the language which the Whigs and Tories used to try to prove their non-partisanship have focused on their rival efforts to appropriate key terms such as ‘patriot’, ‘patriotism’, ‘country party’, ‘national interest’ and ‘public spirit’.<sup>1</sup> These contested terms, however, overlap in important ways with an evolving political discourse of impartiality. The emergence of impartiality, as other essays in this volume will attest, is more often associated with developments in science, historiography, moral philosophy, and ethics, than with the cut-and-thrust world of party-politics. Yet the two terms ‘impartial’ and ‘party’ are of course semantically linked. To be ‘impartial’ means to be of no party, to be ‘non-partisan’. In 1717 the French Huguenot historian Paul Rapin de Thoyras traced the history of the origins of the Whig and Tory parties in his *Dissertation sur les Whigs et*

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Pocock J.G.A., *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: 1957); Cunningham H., “The Language of Patriotism”, in Samuel R. (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols. (London: 1989) I, 57–89; Gerrard C., *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole* (Oxford: 1994); Viroli M., *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: 1995); Knowles R., “The ‘All-Attoning Name’: The Word ‘Patriot’ in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Modern Humanities Research Association* 96/3 (2001) 624–643.

*les Torys*. The second edition (1718), translated by Thomas Ozell, plays on the tension between 'party' and 'impartiality'. It was entitled *An Impartial History of Whig and Tory. Shewing the Rise, Progress, Views, Strength, Interests, and Characters of those Two Contending Parties*.

Rapin's preface exposes the tension between partisanship and impartiality. He claims that only a foreign historian such as himself can write impartially about the rise of party in Britain:

But it is not from them [British historians] that we must expect to learn the true State of the affairs of the two Parties. Those Pieces were published either by *Whigs* or by *Tories*, and consequently by Authors that we may justly suspect of Partiality: Neither is there one of them that does not shew its Author to have a Tincture of it. A Foreigner therefore is the most likely man to give an impartial Account of this Matter.<sup>2</sup>

As Rapin observes, party writers often sought to conceal their 'Partiality' or partisanship through the cultivation of historical impartiality. It is important to recall that there was no formal recognition of the legitimacy of opposition in British government until the parliamentary debate of 1826 in which John Hobhouse coined the term 'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition'.<sup>3</sup> In the early years of political party, opposition was still often dismissed as faction, and much of the political ideology generated by both the government and the opposition from the 1670s onward centred on an imagined ideal of political wholeness or non-partisanship – a government 'above' party. Lord Bolingbroke's *A Dissertation on Parties* (1735) famously depicted the rise of party as an evil that had to be overcome by an end to all parties, a government drawn from the best and most disinterested citizens, irrespective of previous party-political allegiances. Association with a political party was by necessity a declaration of partisanship. From the 1670s onwards, political writers defending Whig and Tory, ministry and opposition, competed over the centre ground, declaring that they were acting selflessly by representing the interests of the country at large. One of the ways in which they did this was by claiming to be 'patriots' who placed the good of their country above private self-interest; and another way they did this was by claiming to be impartial.

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<sup>2</sup> Rapin de Thoyras Paul, *An impartial history of Whig and Tory. Shewing the rise, progress, views, strength, interests, and characters of those two contending parties*, 2nd ed. (London, S. Baker: 1718) vi.

<sup>3</sup> Foord A., *His Majesty's Opposition 1714–1830* (Oxford: 1964).



The political rhetoric of patriotism is analogous to, and in some ways related to, the rhetoric of impartiality. Patriotism differs from impartiality in a number of significant ways, not least in the sense that an emotional allegiance to one's country is inevitably a declaration of partiality towards one's own country over that of other countries or indeed humanity at large. Patriotism exploits emotional attachments, and impartiality presupposes neutrality and detachment from the passions. Yet in political terms, the language of patriotism and the language of impartiality converge in their emphasis on disinterestedness. Both the 'patriot' and the 'impartial' claim to be able to rise above the narrow and partisan demands of political immediacy, to see things from a larger – and longer – perspective. Both the patriot and the impartial often appeal to posterity – 'impartial posterity' – to validate their claims.

The term 'impartial' starts to appear with great frequency in the titles of political pamphlets and poems printed around the period of the Exclusion crisis of 1678–1681, a vital event in the history of the emerging Whig party.<sup>4</sup> The Whigs, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, brought intensive pressure to bear upon Charles II, who had no legitimate heirs, to exclude his successor, his Catholic brother James, Duke of York, from the throne. During this period, anti-Catholic feeling ran high, particularly in London. Some of the most inflammatory anti-Catholic pamphlets lay claims to impartiality. The notorious informer William Bedloe (1650–1680), responsible for supplying the government with details of the 'Popish' plot to assassinate Charles II in 1678, was purportedly the author of *A Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot* and *An impartial account of the several fires in London, Westminster, Southwark [...] Begun and carried on by Papists* (both 1679).<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, the title of *A letter from an Impartial Hater of the Papists to a Friend* (1680), with its (to us) almost comically oxymoronic conjunction of violent religious prejudice and professed neutrality, would serve to indicate that the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Williams John, *An impartial consideration of those speeches, which pass under the name of the five Jesuits lately executed* (London, for Richard Chiswell: 1679); Glanvill Joseph, *The zealous, and impartial Protestant shewing some great, but less heeded dangers of popery. In order to thorough and effectual security against it* (London, for Henry Brome: 1681); Cooper Anthony Ashley, first Earl of Shaftesbury, *An Impartial account of the nature and tendency of the late addresses in a letter to a gentleman in the country* (London, for R. Baldwin: 1681).

<sup>5</sup> Bedloe William, *A Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot* (London, for Robert Boulter, John Hancock, Ralph Smith, and Benjamin Harris: 1679); Bedloe William, *An impartial account of the several fires in London, Westminster, Southwark [...] Begun and carried on by Papists* (London, for Robert Godfrey: 1679).

political climate of this period did not require a sophisticated understanding of the term 'impartial'. The anonymous Protestant author's hatred is 'impartial', presumably because it extends to all Catholics alike and is thus indiscriminate.

Yet within the Restoration period there are far more subtle uses of the concept and terminology of impartiality. A compelling example is the public poetry of the Tory poet John Dryden, Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal. Dryden's Restoration panegyrics and civic poems, notably *Astrea Redux* (1660), *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) and *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), adopt a voice of calm moderation and good sense, a voice which is arguably a rhetorical manifestation of impartiality. The speaker of these poems – 'We' rather than 'I' – deliberately appeals to the nation at large; a nation weary of the vicissitudes of civil war and partisan strife. In *Absalom and Achitophel*, written during the heated period in which Shaftesbury, leader of the Whigs, had been arrested and was awaiting trial for his part in the Exclusion Crisis, Dryden deliberately adopts a perspective which can best be described as 'impartial'. The poem's narrator professes to examine the claims and character of the Whig leaders and impartially concedes their virtues. Of Achitophel (Shaftesbury), Dryden claims:

Yet, Fame deserv'd, no Enemy can grudge;  
The Statesman we abhor, but praise the Judge.  
In *Israel's* courts ne'ere sat an *Abbethdin*  
With more discerning Eyes, or Hands more clean,  
Unbrib'd, unsought, the Wretched to redress;  
Swift of Dispatch, and easie of Access.  
Oh! had he been content to serve the Crown,  
With Vertues only proper to the Gown.<sup>6</sup>

There is a carefully proffered pose here of objectivity and reasonableness. This 'objectivity' is of course at some level a rhetorical stratagem designed to discredit the enemy by drawing attention to his ambition and lack of self-control, and hence by contrast to the speaker's own reasonableness and neutrality. Dryden's masterly use of the rhyming couplet, with its balanced, antithetical clauses, the careful weighing of one claim against another, serves to reinforce through prosodic means the sense of impartiality that he wishes to create.<sup>7</sup> The dedication to *Absalom and Achitophel*

<sup>6</sup> Dryden John, *Absalom and Achitophel: The second edition, augmented and revised* (London, for Jacob Tonson: 1681) 6.

<sup>7</sup> See Bradford R., "Rhyming Couplets and Blank Verse", in Gerrard C. (ed.), *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: 2006) 341–355.

opens with Dryden acknowledging the tense political circumstances of the poem's composition and the dangers of raising a 'Pen for a Party', but then continues:

If I happen to please the more Moderate sort I shall be sure of an honest Party, and in all probability the best Judges, for the least Concern'd, are commonly the least Corrupt [...] And now, if you are a Malicious Reader, I expect you should return upon me, that I affect to be thought more Impartial than I am.<sup>8</sup>

Dryden here exhibits a knowing self-awareness that his posture of 'impartiality' could readily be challenged as a cover for an explicitly partisan, Tory agenda.

The usage of the term 'impartial' in pamphlet titles escalates across the period 1680–1740. Any quick search of Eighteenth Century Collections Online or Early English Books Online will throw up numerous hits with the terms 'impartial' or 'impartiality' in their titles or subtitles. Although, as we have seen, the language of impartiality overlaps with that of patriotism, the term 'impartial' most often appears in those pamphlets in which the political opponents of successive governments hold those in power to account for their perceived or implied malpractice or corruption. Specific political crises – such as the Exclusion Crisis of 1680–1681 (as we have seen), the Sacheverell Crisis of 1709, or the South Sea Crisis of 1720 – instigate a flurry of pamphlets which incorporate the term 'impartial' in their titles. The phrase 'impartial enquiry', for example, a quasi-legalistic concept, enjoys long and widespread usage.<sup>9</sup> It emerges in full force during the aftermath of the South Sea crisis, when the share price of South Sea Company Stock collapsed drastically in September 1720, leaving numerous investors ruined and the government and royal family heavily implicated.<sup>10</sup> The collapse of the South Sea Company instigated a prolonged parliamentary enquiry into its causes; and many pamphlets of the time, in their attempt to make the government publicly accountable, mimic in print form this notion of legal 'impartiality'. Thus we find the anonymous *An impartial enquiry into the value of South-Sea stock; with some thoughts of the occasion of the present decay of trade and credit* (1721); *The Nation preserv'd: or, the Plot discover'd; containing an impartial account of the*

<sup>8</sup> Dryden, "To the Reader", in *Absalom and Achitophel* A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Oldmixon John, *An Impartial Enquiry into the Duke of Ormonde's Conduct in the Campaign of 1712* (London, for J. Roberts: 1715).

<sup>10</sup> See Carswell J., *The South Sea Bubble* (London: 1960); Hoppit J., "The Myths of the South Sea Bubble", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002) 141–165.

*secret policy of some of the South-Sea directors* (Dublin: 1721); and, in a similar vein, Daniel Defoe's pamphlet on John Law's similarly ill-fated Mississippi scheme in France, *The Chimera: or, the French way of Paying National Debts* [...] *Being an impartial account of the proceedings in France, for raising a paper credit* (1720).

Such 'impartial enquiries' into perceived ministerial corruption, including the operations of the Charitable Corporation, were still going on in 1735, the year in which *An Impartial Enquiry into the Transactions of the Late Directors of the South Sea Company* was published, and continued throughout Robert Walpole's time in office. When Walpole was forced to resign from his position as First Lord of the Treasury and de facto Prime Minister in early 1742, following a loss of parliamentary support after the reversals in the early stages of the War of the Austrian Succession, he was not replaced, as many of his political opponents had hoped, by a 'Patriot' or Broad-Bottom administration drawn from the best men of both parties. Instead the Whig oligarchy closed ranks in the interests of self-preservation. Even outspoken former 'Patriot' opponents of Walpole such as William Pulteney were bought off with a peerage. This reshuffling of the party players exposed the gap between political rhetoric and *realpolitik*. By 1743, it was hard for any oppositional writer to revive the flagging rhetoric of patriotism or to trumpet the values of public spirit as an antidote to political corruption.<sup>11</sup> Alexander Pope's unfinished fragment *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty* opens 'O wretched B[ritain], jealous now of all,/What god, what mortal, shall prevent thy fall?' and ironically invites the reader to 'see what succor from the Patriot Race'.<sup>12</sup> Henry Fielding's pamphlet *The Opposition: A Vision* depicts former Patriots jumping on the Whig bandwagon for places in the new government.

Walpole's fall and its uninspiring aftermath seem to have instigated an almost unprecedented obsession with ministerial corruption and 'insider dealing'. Pamphlets attacking the new Whig administration published between the years 1742–1745 resonate with the term 'impartial', such as *An Impartial Review of the Opposition, and the Conduct of the Late Minister since his Secession, with an Enquiry whether Britain is likely to be better for the Change of the Ministry, and in what Manner* (1742); *Faction detected by the evidence of Facts, containing an impartial view of Parties at Home, and*

<sup>11</sup> See Harris R., *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Pope Alexander, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. J. Butt (New Haven: 1953) IV.336.

*affairs abroad* (1743); *A Free and Impartial Enquiry into the Extraordinary and Advantageous Bargain for remitting Money for the Pay of the Forces abroad* (1743); *An Impartial Review of the Present Troubles of Germany* [...] and particularly of the late Battle of Dettingen (1743); *An Impartial Journal, of what passed between Admiral Matthews, and the Combined Fleets of Spain, the 9, 10, 11 and 12 Feb 1743–4* (1744) and *The Political free-thinker, Being an Impartial and dispassionate Enquiry into the Grounds of our Foreign and Domestick Broils* (1745). The extraordinary proliferation of works with the term 'impartial' in their titles or subtitles is in part a legacy of the oppositional tendency to investigate and hold to account ministerial behaviour; yet this intense application of impartial evaluations and judgments seems to reflect something new, extending as it does beyond political pamphleteering into the realms of poetry.

In May 1744 the poet and critic Aaron Hill published a poem boldly entitled *The Impartial. An Address without Flattery. Being a Poet's free Thoughts on the Situation of Our Public Affairs, Anno 1744*. A month later there appeared an anonymous poetic reply to this poem, entitled *A Poet's Impartial Reply to a Poem, entitled The Impartial: An address without Flattery. Being a Poet's free Thoughts on the Situation of our Public affairs, Anno 1744*. Both these poems, and many of the pamphlets of that year, target the conduct of the controversial Secretary of State, John Carteret, 2nd Earl Granville, who during the course of 1742 had committed England to providing Austria with direct military support as well as financial and diplomatic aid during the outset of the War of the Austrian Succession. A man of consummate political ability with a mastery of European affairs, Carteret was also closely associated with the Hanoverian monarchy. He was actively involved in constructing the British-financed 'Pragmatic' army of Hanoverians, Hessians, Austrians, and British which led to the victory over the French at Dettingen in June 1743. Carteret was deeply unpopular with the British public, an unpopularity given focus in parliament by the speeches of the violently anti-Hanoverian William Pitt the elder.

Aaron Hill had briefly overlapped with Carteret at Westminster School during the late 1690s. However, it was under the pseudonym 'Ignotus' ('unknown') that he published *The Impartial*. The use of this pseudonym was part of Hill's attempt to foreground his own impartiality. In his prefatory dedication to Carteret he declares himself 'Free from all Ambition' and 'too low' to merit personal attention. The poem carefully examines the current state of Britain and, while acknowledging a pervasive spirit of faction and malice, finds much to admire in Carteret's singular ability to handle foreign affairs. There is a studious attempt to view Carteret objectively, scrutinising in detail the accusations of royal favouritism which

were often made against him. At the heart of the poem lies Hill's attack on the 'pale *Prejudice*' of party-political bias and the assertion of his own authorial commitment to truth-telling.

What, tho' some Friend thou lov'st had narrower Sight?  
Truth knows no *Parties*; and involves, like *Light*.<sup>13</sup>

Privately Hill appears to have harboured some doubts about his own impartiality. In his correspondence with his friend the novelist Samuel Richardson, Hill questioned whether his poetic defence of Carteret might be shaped by the kind of bias that it affects to despise. In a letter of 3 April 1744, Hill appeals to Richardson as an 'impartial' judge and asks him what he really thinks of Carteret the man. 'You hear the Public Voice, you judge of Things impartially – what do *YOU* think him?'<sup>14</sup> But it is clear from this correspondence that although Hill is at pains to defend Carteret's policies from attack, he does not try to defend him on personal moral grounds. Carteret was known to be ruthlessly ambitious, and his recent second marriage to a 22-year-old society beauty Sophia Fermor (he was 54) had caused scandal and gossip. Hill's attempt to view Carteret 'impartially' – as a capable minister with an unprecedented grasp of international affairs – stems from his sense that true impartiality involves separating the public sphere from the private sphere, a division that has vexed political commentators through history. Richardson's reply to Hill – one of the very few glimpses we have of the novelist's political opinions – is equivocal at best. He repeats some cynical remarks about Carteret's ambitions as a politician:

Altho' I like much the vigorous Turn Affairs have taken, and think it inexcusable in those who took it not before, yet I cannot say, I have any Opinion of ought but the Capacity of the Person you do so much Honour to. I am afraid he will go all Lengths to be Sole or Prime. And he has formerly been said to declare, that if once more he got in, the Devil should not get him out. Lord Compton formerly said of him, as I have heard, that he was the falsest young Man he ever knew. Another Noble Lord once said to my Knowledge, many Years ago, Things greatly to his Disadvantage. The *Publick Cry* weighs nothing with me. An Angel from Heaven taking Place at the Br--sh Helm, would in our Dregs of Time, have *that* against him; Steer he ever so Angelically. But I must own, that, relying on Your Nobleness of Mind, and Love of

<sup>13</sup> Hill Aaron, *The Impartial. An Address, without Flattery. Being A poet's Free Thoughts on the Situation of our Public Affairs, anno 1744* (London, for M. Cooper: 1744) 8.

<sup>14</sup> Aaron Hill to Samuel Richardson, 3 April 1744, Forster MS XIII, 3, fol. 26, Forster Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Merit for Merit's Sake, on Perusal of *The Impartial*, I was resolving to change my Sentiments of the Hero of it, or rather, to banish any Apprehension of the Man.<sup>15</sup>

Richardson's letter echoes the pessimistic view of Britain characteristic of so much political commentary written in the 1740s. Yet despite his own prejudice against Carteret based on hearsay and gossip, he is prepared to concede that Hill's 'Love of Merit for Merit's Sake' might lead him to reappraise his prejudices.

The poetic reply to Hill's poem which appeared the following month was entitled *A Poet's Impartial Reply to a Poem, entitled The Impartial: An address without Flattery. Being a Poet's free Thoughts on the Situation of our Public affairs, Anno 1744*. Customarily this kind of 'reply' to a publication would be an antagonistic riposte to the original, part of the cut and thrust world of party politics. But instead of taking the opposing view, the anonymous author adopts a posture of reasonableness, claiming that his views coincide 'nearly entirely' with those of the author of *The Impartial*. He seems far less interested in entering into the debate about Carteret's character than in deploring the mode of public discourse Hill employs in the poem, especially his claims to impartiality. The anonymous author signs himself 'Antiquae' – a name deliberately chosen to emphasise his allegiance to old-fashioned political virtues of honesty and integrity. 'Antiquae' expresses some cynicism about the praise that Hill has bestowed on this 'Amazing Man' and the poem develops into an embittered catalogue of the failings of the current and previous Whig administrations:

Tell me, ye Courtiers, Patriot-Criticks, tell,  
Did ever W[al]p[ol]e manage half so well?  
Corrupted, Brib'd, Cajol'd, you kiss HIS Rod;  
But *Bully'd* now, you fear the awful Nod.  
You slaves, who once oppos'd your Master's Way  
Who fawning, Cringing, Flattering, Now obey.<sup>16</sup>

The poem exposes the different forms of political partiality that it abhors – the seeking of patronage through fawning and flattery, the taking of bribes – and even implies that despite Hill's posture of 'impartiality', he himself is one of those many writers who have participated in this process.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson to Aaron Hill, 4 April 1744, Forster MS XIII, 3, fol. 17, Forster Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Anon., *A Poet's Impartial Reply, To a Poem, entitled The Impartial* (London, for M. Cooper: 1744) 6.



Hill may have adopted the pseudonym 'Ignotus' for *The Impartial*, but his address to Carteret has, after all, drawn attention to his former role as 'Your Lordship's quondam *Schoolfellow*, *And one of your sincerest Humble Servants*' – a combination of kowtowing and name-dropping that 'Anti-quaes' detests. The poem itemises with disdain the political state of Britain at home and her position abroad. It renounces all partisan positions in a climax of disgust with all politics: 'What is this Farce of momentary Power?/It Rises, Shines and *Fades* in one short Hour./[...] 'Tis wretched all'. Instead of seeking political mediation, the poet abandons all politics and retreats to nature:

Let me, IGNOTUS, in the Summer's Heat,  
Retire contented to some lonely Seat [...]  
My Morn and Evenings Haunt; – the midwood Shades  
For Solitude and Contemplation made.  
[...]  
In Liberty, Ignotus, here I'd dwell,  
In Innocence enjoy my homely cell;  
Laugh at the *Knaves*, despise the *Coward's* Fate;  
Unenvy'd let them be the *Slaves of State*.<sup>17</sup>

This poem suggests that impartiality is only possible in retreat and anonymity, away from the corruptions of power and party. This is a very different kind of 'impartiality' to the carefully attempted balancing of public opinion and personal praise that characterises Hill's original poem on Carteret. Impartiality here has moved into a different realm; we are almost back to where we were with Rapin de Thoyras's claims in 1718 that in order to observe politics 'impartially' one required distance, detachment and even 'foreignness'.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion it can be seen that between the 1670s and the mid-1740s the language of impartiality escalates within party political writing and reaches a peak in the period shortly after Walpole's fall in 1742. The almost tautological title of a poem such as *A Poet's Impartial Reply to a Poem entitled The Impartial* would serve to suggest that impartiality itself as a concept comes under unprecedented scrutiny during the mid 1740s. No longer is it acceptable merely to cloak partisan positions with claims of 'impartiality'. Hill's *The Impartial* and its poetic response and echo, *A Poet's Impartial Reply*, both explore the concept of impartiality and define it in

<sup>17</sup> *A Poet's Impartial Reply* 7.

<sup>18</sup> On impartiality and retreat, see Nathan Stogdill's essay in this volume; on impartiality and the perspective of the stranger, see Bastian Ronge's.



different ways. Hill engages with the idea that an impartial judgement requires a judicious public weighing of claims to merit, and a rejection of personal factors (gossips, slander, personal connections) which might warp that judgment. The author of *A Poet's Impartial Reply* argues that Hill himself is implicated in the very acts that he is trying to transcend (flattery, the quest for patronage, the use of the old-boy network) and that the only ethical position by which one can be deemed truly impartial is one of retreat and retirement, a refusal to engage at all in the public realm. In this sense *A Poet's Impartial Reply* mirrors the movement from town to country, from urban to provincial, from political to apolitical – the ‘flight from history’, in John Sitter’s terms – which has been seen to characterise the literary sensibility of the mid eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Sitter J., *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth Century England* (Ithaca, NY: 1982).

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#### 4. IMPARTIALITY IN CONTROVERSY



## IMPARTIALITY AND DISINGENUOUSNESS IN ENGLISH RATIONAL RELIGION

Rhodri Lewis

John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester and founding Secretary of the Royal Society, died of ‘the stone’ on 19 November 1672. A little less than three years later, his son-in-law (and a future Archbishop of Canterbury), John Tillotson, published what would prove to be one of Wilkins’s most enduring works – going through nine editions by 1734 and eventually being paid the compliment of refutation in David Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779). This was *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (1675), a work that has long been recognised as a foundational text of Anglican rational religiosity, or what is often written of as the ‘Latitudinarian’ worldview.<sup>1</sup> Here, Wilkins sought to advance the notion that the ‘nature of Man [...] consists in that faculty of Reason whereby he is made capable of religion, of apprehending a Deity’.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, Wilkins maintained, he would confound those in thrall to the ‘Humour of Scepticism and Infidelity, which hath of late so much abounded in the World’.<sup>3</sup> (Wilkins did not stoop to identify exactly whom he had in mind, but it seems safe to assume that they were the usual suspects: Hobbes and his purportedly atheistical followers, and various radical ‘enthusiasts’ who mistook their delusions for personal revelation. After 1660, both groups were viewed as expedient scapegoats for the turmoil of the Civil Wars that had afflicted the British Isles over the previous two decades.)

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<sup>1</sup> Studies of the *Principles and Duties* include Westfall R., *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1958) 120–124, 164–167; Shapiro B.J., *John Wilkins, 1614–1672: An Intellectual Biography* (Berkeley: 1969) 233–244; Ferreira J., *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt: the British Naturalist Tradition in Wilkins, Hume, Reid and Newman* (Oxford: 1986); Lewis R., *Language, Mind, and Nature: Artificial Languages in England from Bacon to Locke* (Cambridge: 2007) 176–183. On Wilkins and Hume, see Rivers I., “‘Galen’s Muscles’: Wilkins, Hume and the Educational Use of the Argument from Design”, *The Historical Journal* 36 (1993) 577–597. On Latitudinarianism more broadly, the pre-eminent study is the first volume of Rivers I., *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: 1991–2000); see also Spurr J., “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church”, *The Historical Journal* 31 (1988) 61–82.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins John, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, ed. John Tillotson (London, by A. Maxwell for T. Basset, H. Brome, R. Chiswell: 1675) 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem* 1.

The *Principles and Duties* takes some pains to stress that religion comprises the three parts of revealed religion, natural religion, and ethics; nonetheless, Wilkins's attention, and emphasis, was squarely on the natural and ethical dimensions of belief. In particular, he argued that the existence of a benevolent God could be demonstrated without the need for belief in the truth of scripture. According to Tillotson's preface, the first part of Wilkins's design was to 'establish the great *Principles of Religion*, the *Being of God*, and a *Future State*; by shewing how firm and solid a Foundation they have in the Nature and Reason of Mankind'.<sup>4</sup> And as Wilkins himself phrased it in perhaps the most frequently quoted passage of the *Principles and Duties*, his version of natural religion was something 'which men might know, and should be obliged unto, by the meer principles of *Reason*, improved by Consideration and Experience, without the help of *Revelation*'.<sup>5</sup> In this as in his other writings, Wilkins thus adopted a prose style that made a virtue of its plainness and lucidity, and in which he disavowed the heat and rhetorical flourishes that (in Wilkins's estimation) had too often blighted religious discourse across the mid-seventeenth century. Versions of this rhetorical-discursive manner were common to many of those advancing versions of rational religion, from Nathaniel Culverwell, John Smith, and Benjamin Whichcote (in the 1650s) to Joseph Glanvill, Richard Cumberland, and Isaac Barrow (in the 1660s and 1670s). In the *Principles and Duties*, Wilkins's argument would be framed with such 'strength and perspicuity, as may be sufficient to convince any man, who hath but an *ordinary capacity*, and an *honest mind*; which are no other qualifications than what are required [...] in all kinds of Arts and Sciences whatsoever'.<sup>6</sup>

Underpinning these claims was Wilkins's stated belief that because every human being possessed reason and the power of rational thinking, all had to agree that a tree was a tree, a dog was a dog, blue was blue, and justice was justice – whatever names they might use to represent them, their apprehension was universal.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, Wilkins insisted, every reasonable person had to concede that the order of nature spoke to the existence of God. Not to agree on these things was either to be

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem fol. A2<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem fol. 39<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem 2. On the language and prose style of rational religion, see Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment* I, 5–25, 37–58. Cf. Foster D., "In Every Drop of Dew: Imagination and the Rhetoric of Assent in English Natural Religion", *Rhetorica* 12 (1994) 293–325.

<sup>7</sup> For Wilkins on the psychology of knowing, see his *Principles and Duties* 3–4, and nn. 24–26 below.

*partial* (that is, to have some sort of prior commitment, belief, or affliction that prevents you from engaging openly with the matter at hand), or was to be *disingenuous* (that is, knowingly insincere, and lacking in the freedom required to express yourself in open and honest terms). Accordingly, Wilkins repeatedly urged his readers to keep themselves free of 'wilful prejudice and partiality' when considering questions of religious conviction.<sup>8</sup> In the course of this essay, I want to look more closely at the discourse of impartiality and ingenuousness within the *Principles and Duties*, and through it to say something fresh about the relationship between the rhetorical and doctrinal positions advanced in Wilkins's writing. I hope thereby to shed new light both on some of the tensions underlying certain aspects of English intellectual life until at least the mid-eighteenth century, and on the use of 'impartiality' as an extremely effective, but often disingenuous, framing device with which to neuter those who may not agree with the arguments one is advancing.

But before proceeding any further, it remains to say a word about exactly what Wilkins took the principles and duties of natural-rational religion to have been; doing so gives us a very much clearer picture of what is at stake in Wilkins's account of his doctrinal position. A good starting point is provided by Wilkins's *Ecclesiastes* (1646), a hugely popular preaching manual that would go through eight editions by 1704. In his 1669 revision of the text, Wilkins added a passage identifying two principal dimensions of Christian belief:

*Religion* may be described to be, That general habit of reverence towards the Divine Nature, whereby we are enabled and enclined to worship and serve God after such a manner as we conceive most agreeable to his will, so as to procure his favour and blessing. The *Doctrine* which delivers the Rules of this, is stiled THEOLOGY, or Divinity.<sup>9</sup>

On this account, religion was the practice, and theology was the set of theoretical principles that underpinned and directed it. Turning back to the *Principles and Duties* with this distinction in mind, Wilkins appears as the advocate of a natural-rational religion (or 'habit of reverence towards the Divine Nature') whose duties were established, and regulated, on the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem 35.

<sup>9</sup> Wilkins John, *Ecclesiastes, or, a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching*, 5th ed. (London, A. Maxwell for S. Gellibrand: 1669) 121. See Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment* I, 38–39.

principles of a natural theology that took the lineaments of the divine to be within the bounds of human aptitude.<sup>10</sup>

Wilkins's claim that knowledge of the Creator was a natural gift of the human mind is a powerful one, as it enabled him to argue that the existence of God should command universal consent amongst those with ratiocinative faculties that were at once fully functioning and properly trained. There are numerous instances of this manoeuvre – at once rhetorical and doctrinal – in the *Principles and Duties*, of which I will highlight three. In the first of these, Wilkins is discussing the nature of probable knowledge, and of what one can legitimately assent to on the authority of others:

I do not say, That the Principles of Religion are merely *probable*, I have before asserted them to be *Morally certain*. And that to a man who is careful to preserve his mind free from prejudice, and to *consider*, they will appear *unquestionable*, and the *deductions* from them *demonstrable*: But now because that which is necessary to beget this certainty in the mind, namely, *impartial Consideration*, is in a mans power, therefore the *belief* or *disbelief* of these things is a proper subject of *Rewards* and *Punishments*.<sup>11</sup>

Wilkins's rational theology would therefore be sufficient to save any impartial observer of the natural and moral orders from the punishments attendant on disbelief in the creator, irrespective of whether or not they had been exposed to Christian revelation. (In passing, it might be worthwhile to gloss the concept of 'moral certainty'. It does not connote those things that might be certain to any impartial or moral-minded observer, but instead describes something that cannot be proved logically or mathematically, but that is nevertheless certain beyond reasonable doubt; it is particularly appropriate in disciplines like theology, in which demonstrable proofs are for the most part inapplicable. The concept was a commonplace of Scholastic logic, but Wilkins probably took his version of it from William Chillingworth.)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See further Mandelbrote S., "The Uses of the Natural Theology in Seventeenth-Century England", *Science in Context* 20 (2007) 451–480.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 31.

<sup>12</sup> Chillingworth William, *The Religion of Protestants* (London, Leonard Lichfield: 1638) 36. See further Shapiro B.J., *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: 1983) 31–34; Serjeantson R.W., "Testimony and Proof in Early-Modern England", *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 30 (1999) 195–236, esp. 197. In Wilkins's own formulation, 'I call that *Moral Certainty*, which hath for its object such beings as are *less simple*, and do more depend upon mixed circumstances. Which though they are not capable for the same kind of Evidence with the former, so as to necessitate every man's assent, though his judgment be never so much prejudiced against them; yet



Wilkins deploys similar language in his discussion of sacred history, and his argument that the account of the world's origins given in the book of Genesis could easily be squared with the historical record derived from non-Biblical cultures:

Now *Moses* doth give such a plain, brief, unaffected account of the Creation of the world, and of the most remarkable passages of the first ages, particularly of the plantation of the world by the dispersion of *Noah's* Family, so agreeable to the most antient Remains of Heathen Writers, as must needs very much recommend it to the belief of every impartial man.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the learned efforts of Joseph Scaliger, John Selden, Gerardus Johannes Vossius, and their various successors, it took a bold early modern scholar to venture the opinion that the Mosaic account of the creation was 'plain, brief and unaffected', but let that pass. Spurred on by the threat to the received understanding of history from the theories of Isaac La Peyrère and Thomas Hobbes, vernacular sacred history was a popular genre in the last third of the seventeenth century; the religiously orthodox competed with one another to defend the authority of scripture in the most compelling terms. Wilkins was content to assert that any disinterested reader of works like Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae* (1661) could not fail to be compelled by the acuity of creation as described in sacred scripture.<sup>14</sup> At least one early reader of the *Principles and Duties*, the diplomat and later President of the Royal Society, Robert Southwell, was impressed enough with Wilkins's summary to draw on it in privately affirming 'y<sup>e</sup> Age of y<sup>e</sup> World & y<sup>e</sup> computation of it among the Ancients by Lunar years & how reconciled to y<sup>e</sup> Computation of Moses'.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, when discussing the nature of divine justice (and of the benevolent way in which God governed the created world), Wilkins proposed

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they be so plain, that every man whose judgment is free from prejudice will consent unto them' (Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 7–8).

<sup>13</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 65.

<sup>14</sup> See Allen D.C., *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science and Letters* (Urbana, Ill.: 1949) chap. 5; Gliozzi G., *Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali, 1500–1700* (Florence: 1977) 535–566; Malcolm N., *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: 2002) 383–431; Kidd C., *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: 2006) 54–78; Poole W., *The World Makers: Scientists of the Restoration and the Search for the Origins of the Earth* (Witney: 2010) esp. 27–37.

<sup>15</sup> Southwell's commonplace book (Beinecke Library, Yale University, Ms. Osborn Shelves b. 112; here, p. 14).

[t]hat there have many times happened such special signal Providences for the *punishing* of obstinate sinners, and for the *deliverance* of such as were Religious, in answer to their Prayers, whereby the Supreme Governour of the World hath so visibly pointed out his will and meaning, and so plainly manifested his power, that every impartial man must be forced to say, *doubtless there is a God that judges in the earth*.<sup>16</sup>

The force of his point is clear: look impartially, and you cannot but observe the beauty of providence – before allowing this beauty inexorably to lead you towards another version of the argument from design.

Its religious *telos* notwithstanding, Wilkins's address to the judgement of the 'impartial' reader is more redolent of juridical or philological modes of writing than of those arguing the evident veracity of either scripture or the divine attributes: it appeals to shared experiences and reading. Part of this, of course, is that the designation was intended to be normative, an example of what Francis Bacon had labelled *laudando praecipere* – that is, the rhetorical figure through which 'by telling Men, what they are, [you] represent to them what they should be'.<sup>17</sup> Though Bacon himself did not labour the point, it goes without saying that an author using rhetoric in this way also draws attention to himself, advertising to his readers that he values – and possesses – the virtues in question. Nonetheless, self-proclaimed impartiality had another prominent locus in the 1660s and 1670s, and it is one with close affinities to both Wilkins and the *Principles and Duties*: the early Royal Society and some of the texts published in its orbit. As Thomas Sprat asserted mid-way through his ardently propagandistic *History of the Royal Society* (1667), he had traced the Society's

progress from the first private indeavours of some of its members, till it became united into a *Regular constitution*: and from thence I have related their first *conceptions*, and *practices*, towards the settling of an universal, constant, and impartial survey of the whole *Creation*.<sup>18</sup>

Taking nobody's word for it, the virtuosi of the Royal Society would, as their Horatian motto demanded of them, impartially interpret the natural world without being diverted by either authority or personal preoccupation. In his emphasis on impartiality in considering matters of religion,

<sup>16</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 88.

<sup>17</sup> "Of Praise", in Bacon Francis, *The Oxford Francis Bacon, volume 15: The Essayes, or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. M. Kiernan (Oxford: 2000) 160.

<sup>18</sup> Sprat Thomas, *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (London, Thomas Roycroft for J. Martyn: 1667) 124.

Wilkins sought to translate the rhetoric of the disinterested observer to a different discursive, and generic, category.

This impartial quality of mind was underwritten by what Wilkins called 'ingenuity'. In seventeenth-century English, this term had two separate meanings, which existed alongside – but often seeped into – one another. These resulted from the confused Latin etymologies of the term. On the one hand, ingenuity connoted the adjective *ingenuus*: that is, native, inborn, innate and indigenous; and, by extension, noble, frank, candid, and free from the constraints of the passions or of economic circumstance. On the other hand, it connoted *ingeniosus*: that is, the condition of being clever, witty, and naturally talented. In much early modern Latin writing, *ingenium* simply denoted one's natural abilities, and was opposed to the *ars* with which they could be brought to more polished perfection. However, the point is not simply one of lexicographical curiosity. As Robert Greene has argued powerfully, it was exactly the semantic ambivalence of the English 'ingenuity' that ensured its importance to the rational theologians of the later seventeenth century; more recently, Jim Bennett has noted its centrality to natural philosophers like Robert Hooke.<sup>19</sup> This is because it enabled both groups of early moderns to make the claim that one could not be ingenious (*qua* witty) unless one was also ingenuous – sociable, open, candid, dispassionate, and free from the taint of partiality. As Joseph Glanvill formulated it in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), a work in which 'ingenious' is the principal term of philosophical approbation, 'that's well spent on impartial ingenuity, which is lost upon resolved prejudice'. Ingenuity is enough to make one a judge both acute and disinterested enough to discover, and to recognise, the truth; any student of nature should therefore cultivate in himself just such a disposition, rather than directing his attention to the fruitless certainties of 'resolved prejudice'.<sup>20</sup>

Wilkins's *Principles and Duties* amplifies such claims, making much of the proper disposition that enables one to approach questions of religious

<sup>19</sup> See Lewis C.S., *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: 1960) 86–110; Kemp M., "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts", *Viator* 8 (1977) 347–398, esp. 385–395; Greene R.A., "Whichcote, Wilkins, 'Ingenuity', and the Reasonableness of Christianity", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42 (1981) 227–252; Bennett J., "Instruments and Ingenuity", in *Robert Hooke: Tercentennial Studies*, ed. M. Cooper and M. Hunter (Aldershot: 2006) 65–76, here 68–76; Lewis R., "Francis Bacon and Ingenuity", *Renaissance Quarterly*, forthcoming (Spring 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Glanvill Joseph, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (London, E. Cotes for Henry Eversden: 1661) 224–225.

belief. In its third chapter, for example, Wilkins quotes Grotius's *De veritate religionis Christianae* (1629–1640) on the study of scripture as a way of demonstrating the unique human capacity for learning:

*Ut [ita] sermo Evangelii tanquam lapis esset Lydius, ad quem ingenia sanabilia explorarentur [...] whereby God was pleased as with a Touch-stone to prove and try what kind of tempers men are of, whether they are so ingenuous as to accept of sufficient Evidence, in the confirmation of a holy Doctrine.*<sup>21</sup>

Warming to his theme, Wilkins continued by taking as his text *Acts* 17.11 (on the intellectual virtues of the Berean Jews), and emphasised their willingness ‘to submit unto such arguments [...] as to unprejudiced persons are in themselves sufficient to induce belief’: ‘It was this disposition that was commended in the *Bereans*, for which they are styled εὐγενέστεροι, more ingenuous, teachable and candid, *more noble* than others, *Because they received the word with all readiness of mind*’.<sup>22</sup> This notion that teachability, openness and ingenuity are in themselves intrinsic expressions of Christian virtue permeates the entirety of the *Principles and Duties*, and is most vividly illustrated by its closing paragraph – which also reconfirms the close relationship in Wilkins’s thinking between the impartial observations of the theologian and the natural philosopher:

Whereas, if to the enquiries about Religion a man would but bring with him the same candour and ingenuity, the same readiness to be instructed, which he doth to the study of humane Arts and Sciences, that is, a mind free from violent prejudices and a desire of contention; It can hardly be imagined, but that he must be convinced and subdued by those clear evidences which offer themselves to every inquisitive mind, concerning the truth of the *Principles of Religion* in general, and concerning the *Divine Authority* of the *H. Scriptures*, and of the *Christian Religion*.<sup>23</sup>

In brief, Wilkins’s argument in the *Principles and Duties* is that all human beings would assent to the existence of a Christian God if only they were to have the evidence presented to them in a dispassionately comprehen-

<sup>21</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 32. Cf. Grotius Hugo, *De veritate religionis Christianae* (Paris, Ioannes Maire: 1640) 88–89 (II, 23).

<sup>22</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 33. In the King James Version, *Acts* 17.11 reads ‘These [i.e., the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.’ The notion that *ingenium* was equivalent to the teachability of one’s disposition had a lengthy early modern genealogy: see Goclenius Rudolph, *Lexicon philosophicum* (Frankfurt am Main, widow of Matthias Becker, for Petrus Musculus and Rupertus Pistorius: 1613) 241 (s.v. “ingenium”).

<sup>23</sup> Wilkins, *Principles and Duties* 410.

sive fashion, and that they were then to assess it in a suitably 'ingenious' spirit. Wilkins intimates that he has accomplished the first part of this goal, and challenges his readers to open their minds before following him onto the higher ground of rational religious enlightenment.

How was Wilkins so certain that the totality of humankind could arrive at a notion of divinity that was at once justifiable and universal? In the course of discussing some of those things on which no reasonable or impartial being could dissent, Wilkins moved to address the question directly:

Such kind of Notions as are *general* to mankind, and not confined to any particular Sect, or Nation, or Time, are usually styled κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, Common Notions, λόγοι σπερματικοί, Seminal Principles; and *Lex nata*, by the *Roman Orator*, an innate Law, in opposition to *Lex scripta*, and in the Apostles phrase, the *Law written in our hearts*. Which kind of Notions, [...] are of themselves above all other matters most plain and perspicuous.<sup>24</sup>

Having reaffirmed his attachment to a model of perception and knowledge derived from Aristotelian apprehension (humankind's common reason enables each individual to apprehend the same dog, or colour, or tree), Wilkins advanced that the 'kind of Apprehensions wherein all men do agree, these are called *natural Notions*'. These have a 'suitableness to the minds of men', and are generally acknowledged to be true.<sup>25</sup> One of them was the existence of God.<sup>26</sup>

Here, Wilkins – eminent Bishop, scientist, scholar, and man of business – invites his readers to affirm that he has looked into the nature of human reason and come to conclusions that harmonize philosophy, theology, erudition, piety, and robustly Christian common sense. More pertinently, that he has looked into the matter so that they do not have to. However, precisely because Wilkins wants his readers to take his word for it before moving briskly along, it is incumbent on the scholar of his work to inspect more closely the authorities marshalled in support of his position. Doing so, it rapidly becomes apparent that things are more complicated than he would like them to seem. Indeed, it becomes very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Wilkins's ingenuous, and lucidly conversational, mode of writing serves to hold together an argument that would collapse into incoherence if presented in more rigorous or analytical terms.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem 55–56.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem 57.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem 61.

He begins with the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, or 'common notions', traceable to the writings of Euclid and the Stoa. In Euclid, common notions are the self-evident principles which serve as the foundation of geometry; for instance, that the whole is greater than the part. For the Stoics, common notions have a central epistemological function as the principles in virtue of which we recognise things as they are. The Stoics' texts do not survive, but the surviving descriptions of them – as, for instance, by Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca, and Diogenes Laertius – agree that their common notions are coextensive with 'prolepsis', or preconception. Nonetheless, the Stoics held that all notions, including common notions, had their origins in the senses: when these arise naturally, they are called 'preconceptions'; when through training and conscious thought, 'conceptions', common only to the educated portion of the world. These two kinds of common notions are then seen as the starting points from which natural philosophical enquiry can progress (Plutarch calls them 'seeds'), or as the general concepts in virtue of which we order our universe; in the seventeenth century, they were of particular interest to Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the λόγοι σπερματικοί, or 'seminal principles' have their origin in Stoic physics (as the principles around which the material world was structured), but became a staple of middle- and neo-Platonic thought, most importantly disseminated through Plotinus's *Enneads*. Translated as *rationes seminales*, they are also prominent within some of Augustine's writings, particularly the *De Genesi ad litteram*.<sup>28</sup> In the early modern period, they became widely known as a result of their resuscitation by the Florentine philosopher Marsilio Ficino. For the neo-Platonists, these seminal principles served to link forms in matter with ideas in the mind,

<sup>27</sup> Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of the Elements*, ed. and trans. T.L. Heath, 3 vols. (New York: 1956), vol. I, 155. On the Stoics, see, e.g., Cicero, *Academica* I, 42, II, 20–22; 30–31; Cicero, *De finibus* V, 43; Cicero, *Topica* VII, 30; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VII, 54; X, 31, 33; Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis*, in idem, *Moralia* 1060; 1084–1085. Herbert Edward, Lord of Cherbury, *De veritate*, ed. and trans. M.H. Carré (Bristol: 1937) 115–145. Cf. Lipsius Justus, *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam* (1604) in, idem, *Opera omnia*, 4 vols. (Wesel, Andreas van Hoogenhuysen: 1675) vol. IV, 706–710; Du Moulin Pierre, *Elementa logica* ([Leiden], n.s.: 1613) 58–59 (1.1.2). For clear secondary accounts, see Sandbach F.H., "ENNOIA and ΠΡΟΛΗΨΙΣ in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge", *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1930) 44–51; Spruit L., *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, 2 vols. (Leiden: 1994), vol. I, 54–59; Dyson H., *Prolepsis and Ennoia in the Early Stoa* (Berlin: 2009). See further Serjeantson R.W., "Herbert of Cherbury before Deism", *The Seventeenth Century* 16 (2001) 217–238, here 221–227.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VII, 136, 148–149, 157; Plotinus, *Enneads* IV, 3–4 (esp. IV.4.39); McKeough M.J., *The Meaning of the 'Rationes Seminales' in St Augustine* (Washington: 1926).

and also joined body and mind together. Magical properties were often attributed to them, and in validating the nature of ideas in the mind, they were what enabled humankind to ascend to the Good.<sup>29</sup>

After being driven to some philological exertion in identifying Wilkins's first two sources, the identification of the remaining two is a relatively straightforward task. The '*Roman Orator*' is Cicero, whose *De republica* proposes a universally 'true law [which] is right reason in agreement with nature'.<sup>30</sup> The apostle is Paul, who inscribed in Romans 2.14–15 that even the 'Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law [...] Which shew[s] the work of the law written in their hearts'. Even here, however, Wilkins muddies the waters: these passages of Cicero and Paul were usually deployed in support of an innate moral sense or right and wrong – not reason itself, but 'right reason' or *synderesis*.<sup>31</sup> Put a little differently, he refuses to acknowledge any distinction between moral and epistemological precedents for the argument he is advancing. That Wilkins does not seem to have thought this a problem may seem odd, but is of a piece with the loftily synthetic eclecticism that characterises this passage as a whole. For Wilkins, what his authorities themselves might have been trying to say mattered less than convincing his readers that, viewed from the perspective of impartial ingenuity, they were all referring to the same things, things that in turn supported his view of common natural notions – and a natural theology arising from these. If we turn to consider questions of genre, this approach appears much less surprising: the *Principles and Duties* was an apology for religion, not an investigation into scientific or philosophical truth.<sup>32</sup> In writing it, Wilkins operated within a discursive framework that had been common since St Paul first appropriated the pedagogical techniques of Graeco-Roman *paideia*, and that

<sup>29</sup> Ficino Marsilio, *Platonic Theology*, ed. and trans. M.J.B. Allen et al., 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: 2001–) vol. I, 230–297 (III, 2; IV, 1); idem, *De triplici vita* (1489), in idem, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel, Heinrich Petri: 1576), vol. I, 531–532, 571–572. See further Horowitz M.C., *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: 1998); Hirai H., *Le concept de semence dans les théories de la matière à la Renaissance: de Marsile Ficin à Pierre Gassendi* (Turnhout: 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Cicero, *De republica* III, 22 (cf., e.g., *Pro Milone* IV, 10).

<sup>31</sup> See Greene R.A., "Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience in the English Renaissance", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991) 195–219; Greene R.A., "Instinct of Nature: Natural Law, Synderesis, and the Moral Sense", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997) 173–198.

<sup>32</sup> On the generic distance between early modern religious and natural philosophical writing, see Serjeantson R.W., "Proof and Persuasion", in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 3: Early Modern Science*, ed. L. Daston and K. Park (Cambridge: 2006) 132–175, here 165–168; Lewis R., *William Petty on the Order of Nature* (Tempe, AZ: 2012) 28–31.



were a staple of Christian apologetics addressed to non-believers or the doubtful from Tertullian to Jeremy Taylor. Secure in the rectitude of his beliefs, it was legitimate for the Christian teacher to assemble a *bricolage* of ideas from any literary, historical or philosophical work that strengthened his case. In so doing, its universality would be both reaffirmed and asserted in persuasive terms.<sup>33</sup> The language of impartiality, ingeniousness, and ingenuousness strengthens this position appreciably. In defence of his practical, worldly, and commonsensical version of religion, Wilkins could counter any censure of his scholarship with the accusation that his critics were partial – that is, people whose disposition, education, or habits made them unsuited to the sociable discussion of virtue or religious belief.

The better to understand Wilkins's natural theology, it is instructive to compare the *Principles and Duties* with a contemporary religious work of a very different character, albeit one written by a friend and academic collaborator of Wilkins: Seth Ward – mathematician, formerly Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, another founding Fellow of the Royal Society, and Bishop of Salisbury from 1667.<sup>34</sup> Ward and Wilkins shared a goal in seeking to combat atheism, libertinism, and irreligion in general, but they differed quite radically in how to do so. Indeed, and as I argue below, Ward's work must be read against the Latitudinarian attitudes represented in works like the *Principles and Duties*; specifically, as an implicit repudiation of the claim made in Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* that 'the universal Disposition of this Age is bent upon a *rational Religion*'.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Jaeger W., *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, MA: 1961).

<sup>34</sup> There is no full account of Ward's astonishingly rich life and work; were one to be written, it would make a signal contribution to our understanding of intellectual life in the later seventeenth century. Beyond the *ODNB*, the best study is Whiteman E.A.O., "The Episcopate of Dr. Seth Ward, Bishop of Exeter (1662 to 1667) and Salisbury (1667 to 1688/9) with Special Reference to the Ecclesiastical Problems of his Time", unpublished University of Oxford DPhil thesis (1951). See also Lewis, *Language, Mind and Nature* esp. 65–67, 75–81, 196–197, 206–212. There is no evidence to suggest that Ward had read a draft of what would become the *Principles and Duties* when writing his sermon, but the eventuality is nonetheless plausible: most of it was in a finished form before Wilkins's death, and Ward was on good terms with many in Wilkins's circle throughout the 1670s – including Tillotson.

<sup>35</sup> Sprat, *History* 375. Sprat's claims were motivated by the attempt to assert the fundamental congruity of natural philosophy and established religion. Ward disagreed, but still sought the patronage of the Church for the Royal Society's endeavours. For instance, in August 1672 he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert Sheldon, suggesting that he 'Lend [his] hand to the upholding of the Roy. Soc.': it would be 'no dishonour to y<sup>r</sup> Grace in future times, to have been the cause of sustaining an institution w<sup>ch</sup> (in the Judgement of many Considerable persons) may prove beneficial to the world' (Ward to Sheldon, 10 August 1672, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms. Tanner 42, fol. 29<sup>r</sup>).



Some four months after Wilkins's death, Ward delivered a sermon on Romans 1.16 ('For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: For it is the power of God to Salvation, to everyone that believeth'). This was swiftly published as *An Apology for the Mysteries of the Gospel* (1673), the very title of which intimates that Ward did not share Wilkins's eschewal of mystery in favour of the plain and readily comprehensible. So it proves: in Ward's judgement, the principal cause of the libertinism and scepticism that he and Wilkins deprecated was an 'Impotency to distinguish betwixt [...] Truth and Clearness, Obscurity and Absurdity, Being inconceivable and incredible, being incomprehensible, and being unaccountable'.<sup>36</sup> Given that Christian Godliness was at once true, obscure, inconceivable, and incomprehensible, it would be specious – and ultimately counter-productive – to fight irreligion with an appeal to God's clarity or comprehensibility.

Discussing the text of Acts 17.11 (on the Bereans' virtuosity) touched on by Wilkins, Ward expounded that they were

more noble [...] because they did not precipitously, and temerarily reject the Gospel, as the others did, but were diligent in searching of the Scriptures daily, and in a strict enquiry concerning the Grounds and Motives to Belief alledged by the Apostles.

Their ingenuity consisted in faithfully working through the difficulties of scripture to their own satisfaction, rather than in submitting their minds to its purportedly evident truths. Ward continued that

[i]n matters of so great moment as the Gospel doth pretend to be (in reference to this world, and that which is to come) to despise, or to reject the Proposals, without a just consideration of them, and without an impartial and ingenious examination (and full understanding) of the Grounds and Reasons, upon which they are propounded, savours not of Prudence or Wisdom, Wit or Learning, Ingenie or Ingenuity; in one word it savours neither of a Gentleman, nor a Scholar.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Ward returned to the language of impartiality and ingenuity, this time taking as his cue Matthew 13.23 (in the King James Version, 'he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it'):

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<sup>36</sup> Ward Seth, *An Apology for the Mysteries of the Gospel. Being a Sermon Preached at White-Hall, Feb. 16. 1672/3* (London, Andrew Clark for James Collins: 1673) 14–15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem* 17.

A fair and honest, a Candid and ingenuous attention and Consideration, and a full Understanding, are the causes of the Reception; Therefore an Attention hypocritical and unsincere, An ignoble ignorance, perverseness, and want of Candour and Ingenuity, are the Causes of the Contempt of the Gospel in the judgment of our Saviour.<sup>38</sup>

For Ward, Christianity – and with it salvation – depended on the study of scripture. Although he does not present the Bible as strictly self-verifying in the post-Reformation *sola scriptura* tradition, reading it with intelligence and the correct disposition gave one the only sure grounds for Christian belief. There is no role for rational religion in his worldview, and it is therefore all the more striking that in outlining it, Ward so skilfully manipulates the Latitudinarians' characteristic vocabulary and assumptions. The very qualities of mind and of disposition – that is, openness, ingenuity, and impartiality – that made their rational religion possible also made it unnecessary: if one approached sacred scripture in such a fashion, one could find everything one needed to justify a thoroughgoing Christian faith. Accordingly, and however good one's intentions might be, seeking to buttress Christianity with rational religion was *ipso facto* to confirm that one lacked either intelligence or ingenuousness. If one were in possession of these qualities, one would be in a position to see that the light of scripture was more than sufficient to attest the mysterious reality of the Christian God.

The point is reinforced when Ward again draws attention to the distance between his own views and those of the Latitudinarians. He explicitly positions himself against those who would assert that, when considering God and the Bible, 'whatsoever is Inexplicable, Incomprehensible, Unintelligible is [...] to be accounted incredible, fantastical, fictitious, and to so to be despised' or otherwise deprecated. Amongst the guilty parties were 'Philosophers' and 'Wise men', and Ward wondered that 'If this be not the Ratiocination, and this the Principle of those *Virtuosi*, of whom we are speaking, I desire to be better informed'. Of course, his formal target here remains the ill-defined grouping of sceptics, atheists, and libertines condemned by countless orthodox clergymen in the century from about 1650. But in describing them as 'Philosophers', 'Wise men' and '*Virtuosi*', just as in appropriating the language of ingenuous impartiality, Ward once more allows the inference that he had in mind the advocates of rational religion along the lines given in Wilkins's *Principles and Duties*. He even

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<sup>38</sup> Ibidem 19–20.

begs them to 'consider whither they are going, and whither this Principle [i.e., of insisting on the rational comprehensibility of God] and reasoning will lead them', an entreaty that would hardly have been called for were the virtuosi already to have embraced scepticism, atheism, et cetera. For Ward, 'the *Nature*, and *Essence*, and *Attributes* of God are *inexplicable*, *incomprehensible*, and *unintelligible*; He dwells in a light which no mortal eye can approach unto, such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, and we cannot attain unto it'.<sup>39</sup> All human attempts to know him, whether through the book of scripture or the book of nature, were therefore doomed to fail. Having claimed that to determine the existence and attributes of the deity was the office of rational enquiry, and having failed rationally to demonstrate the existence, nature, power, or goodness of God, the champions of rational religion would inadvertently usher in an age of unchecked irreligiosity.

Leaving to one side the question of God's incomprehensibility, Ward held that the created world was itself a mystery to even the most insightful and well-informed natural philosophers. To take the example of human beings, Ward wondered if those who would minimize the significance of scriptural religion on account of its mysteriousness could explain how human beings 'consist not only of a Body, but of a Soul (a spiritual soul), also':

Can they explain by what [...] these two natures have been brought together; by what bands and ligaments they are united, and how the Communication betwixt them is performed? In one word, Can they explicate, the Phenomena of Sense, Imagination, Memory, Reason, Wit and Bravery?<sup>40</sup>

There are some deft rhetorical touches here (Ward allows himself to be wittily combative – anything other than plain), but the thrust of the argument is threefold. First, if people are content to say that the human understanding exists without being able to explain its operations, should they not extend the same generosity of mind towards God? Secondly, that anyone unable to extend such generosity of mind is culpable – both wilfully querulous and lacking in intellectual integrity. Thirdly, and most powerfully, Ward implies that precisely because humankind was *not* in a position to explain the operations of its own understanding, let alone the dynamics of nature more broadly, it was not possible to advance

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem 24–25.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem 28. Cf. Herbert, *De veritate* 131; Culverwell Nathaniel, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* (London, for John Rothwell: 1652) 84.

anything approaching an argument from design: human reason was not only inadequate to the task of bridging the gap between God and his creation, but had been unable to establish the true order of the natural world. As the virtuosi of the Royal Society could not themselves pretend to understand the natural world, there were only the rudiments of a discernable design from which to argue anything at all. Although Ward saw mathematics as having far more analytical and explanatory power than the physical sciences in explaining nature, even they had no place in religious considerations:

The most pervious, most clear, and comprehensible of all humane Sciences are the pure and unmixed Mathematicks, yet even in Geometry and Arithmetick how many things are forceably concluded to be true, which are inexplicable, unimaginable, incomprehensible?<sup>41</sup>

This situation would be altered by the publication of Newton's *Principia* (1687): Newton's explication of the laws of universal gravitation gave a new lease of life to mathematically inflected versions of religious apologetic. Richard Bentley's 1692 Boyle Lectures are a good case in point, though perhaps the most remarkable example of this kind is John Craige's *Theologiae Christianae principia mathematica* (1699), in which Craige proposed an algorithm through which to determine the validity of religious faith, and in which he sought to put Pascal's *pari* on a more solid geometrical footing.<sup>42</sup> As Ward was suffering badly from dementia by the time the *Principia* was published, we will never know whether its arguments would have satisfied him. But in the early 1670s, his position was as steadfast as it was unambiguous: those who questioned or doubted the sufficiency of the Bible as the basis for religious faith were in error, mistaking the nature of both religion and natural philosophical enquiry. Doing so proceeded either from 'from Ignorance, and want of learning and Understanding', or 'from Pride and Arrogance joyned with a blockish Stupidity'; furthermore, 'That the former is disingenuous, the later disingenuous, [and] that both of them are irrational and absurd is evident'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ward, *Apology* 26. Mathematics had been a staple of Christian apologetics since at least the beginning of the sixteenth century: see, e.g., Erasmus Desiderius, *De copia* (1512–1534), in *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, series 1, vol. 6, ed. B.I. Knott (Amsterdam: 1988) 261 (LB 101).

<sup>42</sup> See Haugen K.L., *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: 2011) 100–105; Nash R., *John Craige's Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology* (Carbondale – Edwardsville: 1991).

<sup>43</sup> Ward, *Apology* 29.

Coming back to the *Principles and Duties* with these strictures in mind, Wilkins begins to seem a less compelling rhetorical presence. Although the paideic wash in which he rinsed his presentation of common human notions is given plentiful sanction by the tradition of Christian apologetics, on Ward's terms it stands accused of being both 'disingenuous' and 'disingenuous'. We should, I think, discount the charge of disingenuousness on grounds of genre alone: for all that common notions, seminal principles, Stoicism and neo-Platonism may have been variously incompatible, Wilkins was arguing a case based on the priority of the theological truth to which he was committed. As a scripturalist and fideist, Ward may have disagreed with this and judged that it opened the door to doubt or disbelief (just as he differed from Wilkins on matters of ecclesiastical politics), but he could in no sense accuse Wilkins of being beyond the intellectual pale of responsible churchmanship.<sup>44</sup> Both men were content to bend a text like Acts 17.11 to the tenor of their broader arguments. The more damaging charge for Wilkins is that of disingenuousness – of bad faith, and of advancing arguments that he knew not to be true, albeit in furtherance of his supervening religious convictions. Consider again the example of common natural notions. If Wilkins sincerely believed these to exist but was content to elaborate on their nature through otherwise incoherent or incompatible examples drawn from classical and Christian learning, so be it: the genre defence is clinching. If, on the other hand, he was not sure whether they existed or, if they did, how it was that they functioned, then he would be disingenuous in presenting them as a plain and ready basis for the elaboration of rational religion: his openness and freedom of expression would be enslaved by an ideological commitment that impartial observation was not in a position to corroborate. The challenge is more acute when one recalls the weight put upon the notions of impartiality and ingenuity – in both its senses – throughout Wilkins's work.

Where, then, did Wilkins stand? To answer the question satisfactorily, it is necessary to step outside the *Principles and Duties*, and look to Wilkins's non-theological writings. In his massive *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), Wilkins outlined his vision of what a new, artificial, language might look like; one that would

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<sup>44</sup> On Ward's distance from Wilkins and ecclesiastical 'comprehension', see Baxter Richard, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr Richard Baxters Narrative of [...] His Life and Times* (London, for T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, F. Lawrence, and F. Dunton: 1696) III, 21–37.

represent the common language of thought in a form that would transcend linguistic boundaries, and that would – by virtue of enabling its speakers and readers to know the entire world – do away with religious discord.<sup>45</sup> The majority of the *Essay* comprises a survey of all human knowledge in a series of tables based on the categories of Aristotelian logic, and in the appropriate place Wilkins turned to human perception and cognition. Strikingly, when enumerating the ‘Internal Senses’ (comprising the three principal powers of imagination, memory and reason), Wilkins made the admission that whether ‘there be any such real Faculties in the Soul as are to be mentioned under this and the preceding Head, is not here to be debated’. For the purposes of the tables, it was ‘sufficient that common experience doth acquaint us with such various operations of the mind’, and that custom had ‘agreed upon such names for the expressing of them’.<sup>46</sup> I have written elsewhere about the provisionality of the *Essay*’s tables, and stressed that Wilkins arranged them according to the principles of familiarity and convenience to give his readers a sense of what could be done were a new and accurate classification of the world to be accomplished – thereby encouraging them to help him bring it about. The point to stress here is that Wilkins the natural philosopher was able to admit that he did not know how the order of nature cohered, and that he did not know how humankind perceived it. That the natural order *did* cohere and that humankind *did* perceive it universally were articles of religiously infused faith, and his ignorance of the relevant details did not trouble him: in time, the ingenuity of learned men (such as the Fellows of the Royal Society) would be able to explain the reality of these phenomena. In adopting such a posture, and as Ward’s *Apology* itself tends to confirm, Wilkins was not unusual amongst late seventeenth-century natural philosophers.<sup>47</sup>

What gets Wilkins into difficulty may at first glance seem paradoxical: if religious faith was legitimately used to provide the foundations for, and to circumscribe, natural philosophical enquiry, why could natural philosophy not offer to reinforce the case for religious belief? The problem is that the *Principles and Duties* makes claims that at once go beyond and contradict such philosophically cautious piety. It claims that the science is

<sup>45</sup> On the *Essay*, see Lewis, *Language, Mind and Nature* chap. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Wilkins John, *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (London, for Samuel Gellibrand and John Martyn: 1668) 196.

<sup>47</sup> See related discussion in Thomas K.V., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth: 1973) 785–794. Cf. also Serjeantson, “Testimony and Proof” 211–213.

settled, and that the natural capabilities of the human mind enable one i) to know something of the divine, and ii) to establish on this basis a rational justification for religious belief. And yet although Wilkins's Christian beliefs may have convinced him that there were common natural notions, this was only a belief, not the plain-to-all-but-the-partial knowledge that Wilkins exploited his cultural capital to assert. Furthermore, on the evidence of his *Essay*, Wilkins himself knew this, but was prepared to forget it in the pursuit of his theological argument. In a word, the *Principles and Duties* reveals itself to be a profoundly disingenuous text; one in which Wilkins passes off as true a line he knows to be unproven in the hope that it will achieve his broader discursive ends. That Wilkins made so much of impartiality and ingenuousness is, furthermore, more than nicely ironic. By clothing his doctrinal position in terms of its ingenuity and ingenuousness, Wilkins was guilty of deep-seated hypocrisy. While eschewing partiality, divisiveness, or persuasion, his prose actually embodies them in a particularly insidious form; rather than attempting to convince the reader of the truth or value of the claims he is advancing, Wilkins attempted instead to coerce them by shutting off the possibility of dissent. The discourse of assumed impartiality and ingenuousness becomes a way of deliberately closing down debate, of insisting that there is only one way in which to view questions of religious, theological and political gravity. To disagree would be to mark oneself out as unreasonable, as disingenuous, as decidedly partial – that is, one unable to recognise truth, even when presented in the most plain and perspicuous terms.

Whatever Ward and the Anglican establishment of the 1670s might have made of such rhetorical strategies, and however disingenuous they might have been, they were successful in establishing a prominent mode of public churchmanship in the long eighteenth century. Within this, the plain language in which theological authorities professed to tell it like it is – framed by a mutually reinforcing 'impartiality' between them and their readers – was in *itself* a doctrinal solution, subsuming the competing claims of faith, reason, and authority, and keeping at bay the threats of enthusiasm and unbelief.<sup>48</sup> Ingenuousness and learning were two sides of the same coin – a condition that was both vouchsafed by, and demonstrative of, the belief that the coin in question had been minted by the Christian God.

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<sup>48</sup> See the cognate discussion of Tillotson in Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment* I, 56.



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## THE RISE OF CONTROVERSIES AND THE FUNCTION OF IMPARTIALITY IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Rainer Godel

Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites.

(Vergil, *Eclogue* III, 108)

In the January 1689 issue of his periodical *Monatsgespräche* the philosopher Christian Thomasius, then based at Leipzig, but later in Halle, programmatically dedicates his journal ‘Allen meinen grösten Feinden’ – ‘To all my greatest enemies’.<sup>1</sup> Thomasius explains this dedication by using an ironic syllogism, originally in Latin:

Our works should be dedicated to people who do or did a good deed to us  
or who could do this in the future.

However, our greatest enemies are the ones who did the best deeds to us  
etc.

Thus, our works need to be dedicated rather to these people than to any  
others (and especially rather than to our friends).<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, Thomasius discusses the apparent paradox of the *propositio minor*: how can our enemies cause good effects? According to Thomasius, they do not achieve this by jointly collaborating in the process of finding the truth. Instead, they unwillingly catalyze this process by means of objections and invective. Thomasius explicitly stresses the ‘Gemüths-Ruhe’, the calmness of the scholar, in his further remarks in the dedication. This variation on sceptic-epicurean ἀταραξία constitutes a focal point in Thomasius’s understanding of communication processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Freymüthige/Jedoch Vernunft- und Gesetzmäßige/Gedancken/Über allerhand/fürnehmlich aber/Neue Bücher Durch alle zwölf Monat des 1689. Jahrs. Durchgeführt Und Allen seinen Feinden/insonderheit aber Herrn Hector Gottfried Masio zugeeignet* (Halle, Salfeld: 1690).

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem fol. a3<sup>v</sup>: ‘Quicunque maximis beneficiis nos affecerunt, afficiunt, et in posterum efficere possunt, illis præ aliis dedicanda sunt scripta nostra./Atqui Inimici nostri capitales sunt illi qui maximis &c./Ergo Inimicis nostris capitalibus præ aliis (& consequenter etiam præ amicis nostris) sunt dedicanda scripta nostra’. All English translations by Rainer Godel. I am indebted to Daniel Ross and Adam Woodis for their thorough revision of my English.

On the one hand, Thomasius's variant of ἀταραξία is generated by the baseless objections of his enemies; on the other, it is said to contribute to one's own clear thinking and, moreover, to the conviction that the truth one has found is certain.<sup>3</sup> Peace of mind does not only hold the key to tranquil relations with others, as Ian Hunter argues with regard to Thomasius's *Ausübung der Sittenlehre*;<sup>4</sup> it also contributes to the truth and certainty of one's own convictions. The more intensely Thomasius's enemies oppose his arguments, the more he is convinced that he is right.

Notwithstanding the rhetorical craftiness Thomasius demonstrates here in dedicating his book to his enemies,<sup>5</sup> heralding the satirical style of what will follow, he also takes into consideration the Epicurean idea that processes of cognition depend on more than the ideal of rational cognition. The state of mind of thinkers, their affects and their prejudices (as Thomasius discusses in his *Lectiones de praeiudiciis*), and, ultimately, their corrupt will, explicitly play a decisive role in shaping the process of finding truth and of cultivating the self.<sup>6</sup> It is not reason alone that makes for a good process of cognition, but this process, in practice, depends on conditions beyond reason. This largely corresponds to Thomasius's conviction that 'man is a fundamentally passionate rather than rational creature'.<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect in this dedication seems worth mentioning: Thomasius replaces the academic *opponens* with the non-academic 'Feind', or enemy. This is much more than a semantic dislocation. Whereas an *opponens* is someone with whom one argues on the basis of probable arguments and logical conclusions, an enemy does not – or at least not usually – use scientific, rational, or reasonable arguments. Thomasius implicitly substitutes academic discussion for a specific kind of non-academic, or, to be precise, partly extra-academic controversy. It is no longer a polemical

<sup>3</sup> On the classical topos of ἀταραξία, see Sextus Empiricus, *Grundriß der pyrrhonischen Skepsis*, introd. and transl. Malte Hossenfelder (Frankfurt/M.: 1985) 95, 99 f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hunter I., *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: 2001) 225.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Karl A.E. Enenkel for pointing out the rhetorical tradition of a dedication to adversaries in the early modern period in response to the delivery of this paper. See also Leiner W., "Dedikation", in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, 2 vols. (Tübingen – Darmstadt: 1994), vol. II, col. 452–457, here 455.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Kimmich D., *Epikureische Aufklärungen. Philosophische und poetische Konzepte der Selbstsorge* (Darmstadt: 1993) 135–144; Godel R., *Vorurteil – Anthropologie – Literatur. Der Vorurteilsdiskurs als Modus der Selbstaufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: 2007) 94–98; idem, "'Eine unendliche Menge dunkeler Vorstellungen'. Zur Widerständigkeit von Empfindungen und Vorurteilen in der deutschen Spätaufklärung", *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 76, 4 (2002) 542–576.

<sup>7</sup> Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments* 224.

exchange between two hierarchically equal actors within the academic system, but a fight between enemies, or even – and this is the metaphor Thomasius uses later – a ‘war’:

Aber ich weiß nicht/wie ich [...] so tieff in die allegorie von Kriege gerathe/ daß ich bey nahe von meinem Vorhaben wäre abgelenckt worden. Du siehest in etwas/guthertziger Leser/wohin ich ziele.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas the kind-hearted reader is rhetorically (by means of a *captatio benevolentiae*) located on Thomasius’s side, the metaphor of ‘war’ describes the way the enemies deal with the issue: they distract Thomasius from the core intellectual aspects of the topic.

Herbert Jaumann has argued convincingly that Thomasius’s *Monatsgespräche* cannot be sufficiently described by calling them the first German critical review journal.<sup>9</sup> He has pointed out that some media genres around 1700 do not have a stable, definite form, but need to be described by their specific way of organizing public communication. The *Monatsgespräche* do not aim only at providing information; they also focus on judgement and practice, on enabling the public to deal with controversial topics for themselves.<sup>10</sup> It seems that, as Thomasius changes the media format from academic treatise to public ‘journal’, and as he simultaneously opens the realm of the debate to a larger audience, a new kind of polemical exchange emerges. The new form calls for another kind of debate.

I argue that this is the point where impartiality gains a new function in the early Enlightenment. Once the debate is no longer bound to each participant’s quest for truth and to each participant’s preference for jointly solving a problem through rational means (the kind of debate to which academic disputes supposedly belong), the reader is the one who is entitled to decide impartially on the facts the contenders have presented. He is called upon as the impartial arbitrator because the newly emerging type of controversy does not seem to be able to guarantee a true result. Once the academic debate has left the academic realm and has ceded intra-academic behavioural and rhetorical standards, it requires an extra-academic arbitrator.

<sup>8</sup> Thomasius, *Gedanken* 13 – ‘But I do not know how I [...] blundered so deep into the allegory of war that I was almost distracted from my plan. You, my kindhearted reader, see, roughly speaking, where I aim at’.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jaumann H., “Bücher und Fragen: Zur Genrespezifik der *Monatsgespräche*”, in Vollhardt F. (ed.), *Christian Thomasius (1655–1728). Neue Forschungen im Kontext der Frühaufklärung* (Tübingen: 1997) 395–404, here 395, 397.

<sup>10</sup> Jaumann, “Bücher und Fragen” 400 f.

Jedoch wird mir verhoffentlich niemand verdencken können/daß ich mich bemühe/durch Entdeckung meines wahren Absehens denen Unpartheyischen zum wenigsten Gelegenheit zu geben/daß Sie künfftig von diesen meinen Gedancken ein milder Urtheil fällen.<sup>11</sup>

As we can see, impartiality leads to mildness, to the containment of affects, and guarantees a reliable judgement. The reader as impartial arbiter does not (or not only) need to be characterized by his intellectual, but also by his moral qualities that enable him to judge mildly – an idea that will turn towards the demand for benign judgements in Halle-based Georg Friedrich Meier's moral philosophy several decades later.<sup>12</sup> Thomasius's *Monatsgespräche* indicate a discursive change which renders impartiality more relevant to the controversial discourse. Thomasius addresses a wider circle of readers who are incorporated into the debate. They are no longer a mere receiving audience who learn from what the academics teach them. Instead, they become part of the process of cognition. This goes along with a radical shift in the debate's character. Controversies beyond the academic realm seem to necessitate an impartial judge who is interested in finding a solution for the problem and who is able to do this because he is not afflicted with affects and subjective presuppositions or prejudices with regard to the issue. This function of a third party seems to be the core difference between the Enlightenment extra-academic controversy and the reigning idea of an academic controversy around 1700. Thus, the emergence of impartiality is closely connected from this moment on with the emergence of a new form of controversy.

### I. *Changing the Form of the Controversy*

As a matter of course, debates, disputations, and polemics affected academic life even in the previous centuries. Gaining, teaching, and transferring knowledge was conceived as an agonistic activity. However, I argue that around the turn of the eighteenth century, the character of the Ἀγών

<sup>11</sup> Thomasius, *Gedancken* 5 – 'I hope that no one will take amiss that, by means of exposing my true intentions, I try to give the opportunity to the impartial [readers] to deliver a mild judgement in the future on my thoughts'.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Berg G., "Schwierigkeiten der Gemütererkenntnis. Kritik und Funktionalisierung von Vorurteilen in der 'Anthropognosie' Georg Friedrich Meiers", *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 28, 1 (2004) 9–26.

evidently changes, and that it is this change that generates a new relevance for the trope of impartiality. This change comprises two major aspects.

The first is what one may call, following Michel Houellebecq, *l'extension du domaine de la lutte*.<sup>13</sup> Recent research has shown that debate formats changed towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> The scholastic habitus was sharply criticized; the syllogistic *elenchus* was replaced by a more open dialogic form which culminated in the Shaftesburian dialogue that did not presuppose different levels of knowledge but rather aimed at a joint process of gaining knowledge;<sup>15</sup> and several authors – Thomasius among them – attempted to reshape the inflexible form of the neo-scholastic philosophical preparation by propagating a differentiating, dialogical contention instead of the traditional *disputatio*.<sup>16</sup> Whereas in the Early Modern period, the (ideal) academic discussion was focused on manageable, resolveable, and socially controllable issues which students and scholars discussed under accepted and well-known preconditions, the debate went public through the opening of the academic realm.<sup>17</sup> The new kind of controversy, established in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, increasingly addresses and includes – as we have seen in the *Monatsgespräche* – a public located outside of the university

<sup>13</sup> Houellebecq M., *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (Paris: 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Traninger A., *Disputation, Deklamation, Dialog. Medien und Gattungen europäischer Wissensverhandlungen zwischen Scholastik und Humanismus* (Stuttgart: 2012); Vollhardt F., “‘Die Finsternüß ist nunmehr vorbey’. Begründung und Selbstverständnis der Aufklärung im Werk von Christian Thomasius”, in Vollhardt F. (ed.), *Christian Thomasius (1655–1728). Neue Forschungen im Kontext der Frühaufklärung* (Tübingen: 1997) 3–13; Marti H., “Disputation”, in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, 2 vols. (Tübingen – Darmstadt: 1994), vol. II, col. 866–880; Marti H., “Dissertation und Promotion an frühneuzeitlichen Universitäten des deutschen Sprachraums. Versuch eines skizzenhaften Überblicks”, in Müller R.A. (ed.), *Promotionen und Promotionswesen an deutschen Hochschulen der Frühmoderne* (Cologne: 2001) 1–20; Gierl M., *Pietismus und Aufklärung. Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: 1997).

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Schmidt-Haberkamp B., “‘Go to the poets’: die Kunst des Selbstgesprächs bei Shaftesbury”, in Godel R. – Krings I. (eds.), *Shaftesbury*, special issue of *Aufklärung. Interdisziplinäres Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts und seiner Wirkungsgeschichte* 22 (2010) 17–40.

<sup>16</sup> See Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments* 211f.; on the *disputatio*, Berg G., “Sind Preisfragen die aufklärerisch-öffentliche Form der *disputatio*? Ein Antwortversuch am Beispiel der Berliner Volksbetrugs-Preisfrage von 1780”, in Gindhart M. – Kundert U. (eds.), *Disputatio 1200–1800. Form, Funktion und Wirkung eines Leitmediums universitärer Wissenskultur* (Berlin – New York: 2010) 167–199, here 171. Marti argues that *disputationes* are not necessarily controversial in the Early Modern period. See Marti, “Disputation” 877 f.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Schild H.J., “Debatte”, in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, 2 vols. (Tübingen – Darmstadt: 1994), vol. II, 413–423.

system. Ursula Goldenbaum has shown in her 2004 book on Enlightenment debates that this social extension of the controversy brings about an expansion of the issues: she argues that philosophical, poetic, theological, judicial, and other questions were closely intertwined.<sup>18</sup>

Another factor can be traced back to what Wilhelm Kühlmann has described as the origin of the new form of the critique. He argues that this new form emerges ‘without being supported by a new definition of what the purpose and character of science and education should be’.<sup>19</sup> The point he makes coincides with the new kind of controversy already discussed here: a new type of public dispute that does not rely on the strict rules of academic behavior and academic understanding. However, these new forms rely upon three core elements of what was later called the Enlightenment. First, they base themselves upon the Enlightenment’s turn against the *praeiudicium auctoritatis*: one was no longer supposed to accept an opinion only because it was bequeathed by academic authorities. Second, these forms partake in the developing spirit of critique by associating themselves with the scepticist renewal of the late seventeenth century, and they build upon the insight into the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge. Moreover, it is – in contrast to what Thomasius conceived of as the seventeenth century tradition worth fighting against – no longer the university professor alone who is considered capable of generating knowledge. Moreover, it came to be thought that a professor’s cognitive processes are subject to the same anthropological preconditions and limitations as the thinking of other people. This is exactly the point when Thomasius names, as we have seen, affects, emotions, and prejudices as crucial elements of a process of cognition – not because they contribute to finding the truth, but because they inhibit human thinking in practice. According to Thomasius, the cognitive process is closely connected not only with human reason, but also with affects and emotions.

Thus, I argue that the turn of the century saw the emergence of a new kind of polemical exchange which is closely intertwined with the emerging function of impartiality. The early eighteenth century saw the rise of what Marcelo Dascal, in his typological approach to a theory of polemical

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Goldenbaum U., “Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1697–1796. Einleitung”, in Goldenbaum U. (ed.), *Appell an das Publikum. Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1687–1796* (Berlin: 2004), vol. I, 1–118.

<sup>19</sup> Kühlmann W., *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat. Entwicklung und Kritik des deutschen Späthumanismus in der Literatur des Barockzeitalters* (Tübingen: 1982) 455.



exchange, named 'controversy': an exchange that begins with a distinct and concrete problem that could actually lead to a 'true' solution, but that soon broadens to far-reaching issues and fundamental divergences. Controversies in this understanding deal with contrary attitudes and preferences and with divergent methods of gaining knowledge. In controversies, the contenders gather arguments from widely differing epistemological positions without distinguishing exactly between logical or rational arguments, opinions, hypotheses, and attitudes. They reflect a broad range of facts and goals, of judgements and methods, and they aim to convince the opponent and/or the public, rather than to solve a problem.<sup>20</sup>

This new kind of controversy gives rise to a set of conspicuous metaphors used in order to describe its specific character. As we have seen, Thomasius employs the metaphor of 'war' and reflects upon it. This metaphor was widely used in the eighteenth century, even by such level-headed thinkers as Albrecht von Haller, who speaks with regard to his controversy with Julien Offray de La Mettrie of a 'Krieg zwischen dem Guten und Bösen, zwischen dem Glücke der Welt und ihrem Elende': 'a war between good and evil, between the bliss of the world and its distress'.<sup>21</sup>

Yet another widely used metaphor may seem even more apt to describe the specific character of the controversy and the role of the public. Frank Grunert has pointed to the fact that Thomasius also uses the metaphor 'Tragi-Comödie' to characterize his dispute with Hector Gottfried Masius.<sup>22</sup> By using this metaphor, Thomasius refers to the public and performative character of the controversy. This kind of controversy aims to

<sup>20</sup> Dascal M., "Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves", in Čmejrková S. – Hoffmannová J. – Müllerová O. – Světlá J. (eds.), *Dialoganalyse VI. Referate der 6. Arbeitstagung Prag 1996. Dialogue Analysis VI. Proceedings of the 6th Conference Prague 1996*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: 1998) 15–33, here 22; Spoerhase C., "Kontroversen: Zur Formenlehre eines epistemischen Genres", in Klausnitzer R. – Spoerhase C. (eds.), *Kontroversen in der Literaturtheorie/Literaturtheorie in der Kontroverse* (Bern et al.: 2007) 49–92, here 70. Spoerhase narrows the concept of controversy to academic controversies only. This does not seem helpful for analyzing historical controversies, especially in periods when one cannot distinguish precisely between academic and non-academic knowledge. On academic and scientific controversies, see Machamer P. – Pera M. – Baltas A., *Scientific Controversies* (New York et al.: 2000), esp. on Leibniz's *ars disputandi* Dascal M., "Introductory Essay", in Dascal M. (ed.), *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: The Art of Controversies* (Dordrecht: 2008) xix–lxxii.

<sup>21</sup> Haller Albrecht von, "Vorrede des Uebersetzers", in Formey Johann Heinrich Samuel, *Prüfung der Secte die an allem zweifelt, mit einer Vorrede des Herrn von Haller* (Göttingen, Vandenhoecks seel. Wittve: 1751) 7–55, here 53.

<sup>22</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Vernünftige und Christliche aber nicht Scheinheilige Thomasi-sche Gedancken Und Erinnerungen Über allerhand Gemischte Philosophische und Juristische Händel. Andrer Theil* (Halle im Magdeburg., Renger: 1724) 332. Cf. Grunert F., "Händel mit Herrn Hector Gottfried Masio". Zur Pragmatik des Streits in den Kontroversen mit dem

move the reader, just like a theatre play aims to move the audience. It uses specific means to achieve its purpose, means that do not fit with processes of rational cognition solely, but produce and use emotions, invective, polemics, and several extreme performative effects in order to produce excitement. One has to bear in mind the theatrical performances of the 'Wanderbühnen' of the period around 1700 in order to understand the drastic difference Thomasius signals with this metaphor. The main repertory of these German travelling theatre companies consisted of anti-nobility and anti-bourgeois comedies or tragi-comedies with sometimes grotesque, sometimes directly offending affective elements. By calling his controversy with Masius a 'Tragi-Comoedie' of that kind, Thomasius stresses that this dispute no longer follows the ideal of an academic discussion that is supposed to aim at true solutions and to eliminate mistakes admitted by both sides concerning the definition or explanation of the object.<sup>23</sup> One might argue that Thomasius, by using this metaphor, puts the idea of ridiculing the other to the fore. Moreover, this metaphor also implies that Thomasius's controversy with Masius mixes two diverging performative genres: the serious, grave genre of the academic 'tragedy', dealing with serious topics and highly important questions, and the polemical, absurd theatre of a public controversy. And it is this specific mixture of genres that requires a third party: an impartial judge. Once the academic controversy includes elements of an affective or even insulting comedy, one needs someone outside of the academic realm who is not emotionally involved in the controversy, someone who is able to rationalize the arguments that are buried under insult and injury and bring the debate back to seriousness.

## II. *Christian Thomasius's Händel and the Function of Impartiality*

Thomasius uses this metaphor of 'tragicomedy' to characterize his dispute with Hector Gottfried Masius. This quotation is taken from his eight-volume series of *Händel*. I shall demonstrate in the following that the new kind of controversy I described in the first part of my essay and the new function of impartiality are mutually dependent.

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Kopenhagener Hofprediger", in Goldenbaum U. (ed.), *Appell an das Publikum. Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung. 1687–1796* (Berlin: 2004), vol. I, 119–174, here 153.

<sup>23</sup> See Dascal's ideal of an academic discussion as 'a polemical exchange whose object is a well-circumscribed topic or problem' in Dascal, "Types of Polemics" 21.

In 1720, the 65-year-old Christian Thomasius began to review his academic career, and especially the arguments he had had from the 1680s to the 1720s. Within six years, Thomasius published the four volumes of *Ernsthaffte/aber doch Muntere und Vernünfftige Thomasische Gedancken und Erinnerungen über allerhand außerlesene Juristische Händel*, followed by the four volumes of *Vernünfftige und Christliche aber nicht Scheinheilige Thomasische Gedancken und Erinnerungen über allerhand Gemischte Philosophische und Juristische Händel*.<sup>24</sup> Altogether, these came to approximately 4,000 pages that have not yet been analyzed as a whole. These volumes are not merely autobiography, despite Rolf Lieberwirth's argument to the contrary.<sup>25</sup> Using the autobiographical gesture of announcing the reviewing of the work of his lifetime, Thomasius here connects multiple time layers and multiple genres. He publishes and re-publishes in his *Händel* biographical memoirs, legal opinions, polemics, pasquils, disputations, lectures, letters, book reviews, commentaries, and prefaces, written by not only Thomasius himself, but also by other authors and even Thomasius's opponents. Their writings are reprinted in part and critically commented on by Thomasius; furthermore, he adds glosses or introductions to their texts. Some texts collected in these volumes date back to the late 1680s, yet they are closely intertwined with newer texts and texts (or additions to texts) that were written specifically for the compilation of the *Händel*.

This mixture of several time layers with diverging texts and authors generates a dense network of cross-references that complies with a

<sup>24</sup> Naming collections of judicial controversies 'Händel' is not completely unusual in the early modern period. See, e.g. Abele von und zu Lilienberg Matthias, *Metamorphosis Telæ Judicæ, Das ist: Seltzame Gerichts-Händel/Samt denen/hierauf gleichfalls selzam erfolgten Gerichts-Aussprüchen/zusammen getragen/mit Lustigen Anmerkungen erläutert/Auch unterschiedlichen Geschichten vermehret/und an vielen Orten verbessert*, 4 parts, 8th ed. (Nürnberg, Johann Adolphs: 1712) [first edition 1651–1654]. Abele, however, in contrast to Thomasius, does not aim to represent his own and his opponents' arguments, but to narrate rather bizarre – and in this quite close to collections of droll stories – legal cases in order to provide rhetorical didactics. 'Alle Straff-Sachen schmecken nach der Gall; doch wirst du bey diesem meinem Wercklein gleichwol finden/wie die Teutsche Wohlredenheit auch in den hässigen Gerichts-Sachen dennoch annehmlich geübt werden könnte: Gelehrt und wachsam zu seyn/dienet viel zum Obsieg des Rechtsens [...]', Preface, fol. )(3<sup>r</sup>. See also Auwers M. (ed.), "Abele von und zu Lilienberg, Matthias", in Kühlmann W. with Aurnhammer A. – Egyptian J. – Kellermann K. et al. (eds.), *Killy Literaturlexikon. Autoren und Werke des deutschsprachigen Kulturraumes*, 2nd ed. (Berlin – New York: 2008), vol. I, 8–9.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Lieberwirth R., *Christian Thomasius. Sein wissenschaftliches Lebenswerk. Eine Bibliographie* (Weimar: 1955) 131.

specific kind of knowledge acquisition Thomasius had already propagated in his Leipzig period. In the *Monatsgespräche*, he says:

Ich habe aus zuversichtigen und gegründetem Vertrauen zu meiner Lehre die studirende Jugend destomehr angemahnet/nebst derselben auch die Lectiones meiner Hochgeehrten Herren desto mehr zu besuchen/umb selbst zu erkennen/welche von beyden Theilen es am aufrichtigsten [...]mit der Warheit meinete.<sup>26</sup>

‘Aufrichtigkeit’ or ‘sincerity’ is here a code word for what Steven Shapin has described as one of the central issues of trustworthiness in the late seventeenth century: two opposing parties in argument with each other both explicitly claim that they have found the truth and that they are trustworthy agents in the academic process, and yet neither of them is willing to follow the logical conclusions or empirical observations of the other party.<sup>27</sup> They clearly have an issue with agreeing upon the methods of finding the truth. In the early eighteenth century, situations such as this (ironically) led to a revival of the *argumentum auctoritatis* and to emphasising the close connection of morality and academic behaviour.<sup>28</sup> This diagnosis largely corresponds to what Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison identify as the pre-history of objectivity: the importance of the processes of selection, comparison, judgement, and generalization for a cognitive process that on the one hand aims at what was called ‘natural truth’ in the eighteenth century (the kind of truth that can be found by observing nature), but on the other hand is increasingly aware of the epistemological conditions and issues of this process.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, a third party, whose task it is to decide which of the two contenders can be considered more sincere, needs to be involved in the cognitive process. In order to do so, this party needs to use the pre-

<sup>26</sup> Thomasius, *Gedanken* b4v – ‘Based upon my confident and well-founded trust in my teachings I prompted the young students explicitly, besides listening to my own teachings, to hear the lectures of the honorable gentlemen, in order to recognize for themselves which party [...] was the most sincere with regard to truth’.

<sup>27</sup> See Shapin S., *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago – London: 1994) xxv, 3 ff., 11, 22 ff. According to Shapin, witnesses may solve this issue – which is not necessarily the case.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Godel R., “Anatomische Evidenz. Die Debatte zwischen Albrecht Haller und Georg Daniel Coschwitz”, in Hoorn T.v. – Wübben Y. (eds.), *‘Allerhand nützliche Versuche’. Empirische Wissenskultur in Halle und Göttingen (1720–1750)* (Hannover: 2009) 41–63; Godel R., “Controversy as the Impetus for Enlightened Practice of Knowledge”, in Holenstein A. – Steinke H. – Stuber M. (eds.), *Scholars in Action. The Practice of Knowledge and the Figure of the Savant in the 18th Century* (Leiden – Boston: 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007) 59.

sumed *libertas philosophandi*. They need to use their capacity and will to free-thinking in order to find an independent and therefore legitimized judgement – outside of what the parties themselves maintain. In other words: the third party *must* be impartial, they must not be biased or emotionally involved and they have to be capable of independent thinking. The reading public constitutes this third party in Thomasius's *Händel*. The readers are supposed to be what Stenzel calls the 'polemical authority',<sup>30</sup> the ones who are entitled to decide a debate by forming an independent opinion.

In the preface to the first volume of the *Händel*, Thomasius expresses his intentions with regard to his collection: distinguished friends, he says, have persuaded him that he needs to counter the spreading of untruths and the damaging of his reputation by his opponents. Obviously, it is not only truth itself which is at stake here, but also the process of finding it. This goal shall be reached,

[indem ich theils] etliche schon längst concipirte Schrifften übersähe und publicirte/theils daß ich die allbereite driten und mit einigen Anmerckungen erläuterte/oder deutlicher/die bey Erklärung derselben schon vor geraumer Zeit darzu geschriebene Randglossen/darzu setzte; theils daß ich zu nützlichen und die gemeine Irrthümer bestreitenden Schrifften etwa eine Vorrede machte; theils daß ich die von mir verfertigte Responsa und Urtheile durchgienge/und die merckwürdigsten von denen anderen absonderte/und nach und nach heraus gäbe.<sup>31</sup>

Notably, it is a third party that is addressed here in order to decide on the controversy. This third party, the impartial readers, is supposed to become an important part of the cognitive process. Thomasius needs them here because the controversy is no longer an academic debate, as the opponent is said not to possess the attributes claimed by the *Händel* on their

<sup>30</sup> Stenzel J., "Rhetorischer Manichäismus. Vorschläge zu einer Theorie der Polemik", in Schöne A. (ed.), *Kontroversen, alte und neue*, vol. 2: *Formen und Formgeschichte des Streitens* (Tübingen: 1986) 3–11, here 5 f., 7.

<sup>31</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Ernsthafte/aber doch Muntere und Vernünfftige Gedancken u. Errinnerungen über allerhand außerlesene Juristische Händel. Erster Theil* (Halle im Magdeburgischen, Renger: 1720) no pag., Preface – 'partly by reviewing writings that have been drafted a long time ago and by publishing them; partly by explaining them to a third party, along with some comments; or, more distinctly, by adding glosses that have been written a long time ago in order to explain the comments; partly by fabricating a new preface to useful writings that fight common errors; partly by reviewing the juridical answers and judgements of my own and selecting and editing the most noteworthy of them bit by bit'. See also the similar preface to Thomasius, *Vernünfftige und Christliche aber nicht Scheinheilige Thomasische Gedancken. Andrer Theil*.

title-pages: he is not capable of conducting an 'ernsthafte, muntere, vernünftige, christliche, nicht scheinheilige' (serious, lively, reasonable, Christian, and not hypocritical) debate. These attributes comprise an enlightened model for the public waging of conflicts. They form core criteria of an educated, polite, enlightened demeanour. This is the standard Thomasius's opponents, in his opinion, do not fulfil and are not willing to fulfil. At this crucial point the trope of impartiality enters the realm of the newly designed controversy. It seems that it does not suffice that Thomasius claims to be impartial himself, as he claims to use rational and reasonable arguments without being biased. As we have seen, Thomasius considers it difficult to always act driven by rationality only. Thomasius's early psychology of affects does not deny that reason alone does not determine cognitive processes. However, the issue here is that Thomasius's opponents are said to be unwilling to be impartial, and that someone else needs to fulfil this role. In his preface to the second volume of the *Juristische Händel*, Thomasius directly addresses the readers:

Sie werden aber doch auch/wenn Sie vernünftig handeln wollen/deßwegen [wegen seiner Ausführlichkeit, R.G.] auff mich nicht erzürnet werden/wenn sie bedencken/daß alles unpartheyisch und ohne Heucheley oder Feindschafft von mir erzehlet worden/und daß ich des Lesers Urtheil auch lediglich überlasse/wo etwan auch von mir hier und dar contra regulas prudentiae pecciret worden.<sup>32</sup>

On the one hand, impartiality here is something Thomasius claims to have used as a guideline for his own writing. On the other hand, Thomasius cedes the decision whether or not he presented his and the others' arguments impartially to the readers. I argue that making the readers impartial judges is a new, enlightened attempt to prohibit subjective opinions from prevailing. This is not a mere gesture or a rhetorical loophole. Although – as mentioned above – this model requires the idea of an 'ideal' relationship between the text and its readers, Thomasius nevertheless aims to implement it. For, according to Thomasius, this model reacts to the deficits of public controversies, to their lack of balance, reluctance, reasonableness,

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<sup>32</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Ernsthafte/aber doch Muntere und Vernünftige [Thomasische] Gedanken u. Erinnerungen über allerhand außerlesene Juristische Händel. Dritter Theil* (Halle im Magdeburgischen, Renger: 1721) preface, no pag. – 'But, if you want to act reasonably, you will not be enraged by this [by his tediousness, R.G.], if you consider that I presented everything impartially and without hypocrisy or hostility, and that I leave it to the readers' judgement only where I may perhaps have sinned against the rules of wisdom from time to time'.

and impartiality. In his *Händel*, Thomasius repeatedly invites the readers to think for themselves, to participate in the debate, to contribute their statements or to add information he does not have. In the preface to the second part of the *Juristische Händel*, he declares, before displaying two diverging opinions: 'kan der Leser zum voraus nachdencken, ob er es mit dem Autore, oder mit mir halte'.<sup>33</sup> In several prefaces, the readers are explicitly asked to contribute: 'wenn mir jemand nähere Nachricht von diesem Bedencken/oder durch zum wenigsten von dem Autore desselben wird geben können'.<sup>34</sup> Thomasius opens up a public realm by presenting debates in a new form: by mixing divergent genres, divergent authors, and divergent forms of comment. However, he does not abandon the claim that his position is true. The 'epistemic virtue' of the natural truth does not need to be given up when some problems occur in the cognitive process.<sup>35</sup> Though divergent pretensions to knowledge clash, this does not mean that truth cannot be found anymore.<sup>36</sup> Yet, Thomasius here has to deal with an issue generated by the need to establish new forms of trustworthiness in debates that transgress the borders of the university. Therefore he repeatedly calls for the impartial judgement of the readers. They have a high likelihood of impartiality because their process of cognition is not affected with emotions with regard to the issue at stake. They are not a biased party in this process, but have the chance to judge on the basis of their own independent thinking. Thomasius displays in his *Händel* his arguments and the arguments of his opponents more than once, and then he urges the readers to decide themselves:

Die eine Parthie wird bald gedacht haben [...] – Die andere Parthie wird gedacht haben: [...] – Nun zweifle ich keinesweges, daß bey Lesung dieser passage nach dem Unterscheid beyder nur erwehnter Partheyen, auch unterschiedene und wiederwärtige Gedanken werden aufgestiegen seyn, davon ich meine unmaßgebliche Meynung kürztlich entdecken, und davon das Urtheil dem unpartheyischen Leser überlassen will.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Ernsthafte/aber doch Muntere und Vernünfftige Gedancken u. Errinnerungen über allerhand außerlesene Juristische Händel. Zweyter Theil* (Halle im Magdeburgischen, Renger: 1720) preface, no pag.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> See Daston – Galison, *Objectivity*.

<sup>36</sup> On the concept of "Wissensansprüche", see Danneberg L., *Die Anatomie des Text-Körpers und Natur-Körpers. Das Leben im liber naturalis und supernaturalis* (Berlin – New York: 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Ernsthafte/aber doch Muntere und Vernünfftige Gedancken u. Errinnerungen über allerhand außerlesene Juristische Händel. Erster Theil* (Halle im Magdeburgischen, Renger: 1720) preface, no pag., last page – 'One party probably has thought:



The readers are entitled to judge impartially since they are capable of reasoning for themselves, irrespective of their academic or even non-academic background. This idea presupposes that, in general, *all human beings* are capable of using their innate cognitive capacities. Nonetheless, it does not presuppose that all human beings have *equal* cognitive capacities. In order to serve as impartial arbiters in a controversy, it suffices that the reading public as a whole is not afflicted with affects or a specific will guided by emotions concerning the topic at stake and that it is able to reason for itself. Thomasius's idea here is that one is able to judge impartially when one is not emotionally involved. This corresponds to the basic presupposition that emotions and the human will tend to influence cognitive processes. Thus, one might argue that Thomasius's idea of attributing impartiality to the readers emerges with the changing character of the controversy, with its move beyond the academic world.

This is not confined to Thomasius's late work. As early as 1693, Thomasius had already explicitly invited all of his readers to contribute to his *Historie Der Weißheit und Thorheit*:

Ich hoffe aber der Leser werde diese probe nicht ungeneigt aufnehmen/und so er selbst hierzu künfftig etwas beytragen kan/mir damit an die Hand zu gehen nicht entstehen/als worumb ich Ihn nochmahl gebührend ersuche.<sup>38</sup>

This is closely connected with the idea that intellectual discourse is not restricted to academics:

Durch die Weißheit liebende/an die dieses mein Schreiben gerichtet ist, verstehe ich nicht eben Doctores, Licentiatos, Magistros, Baccalaureos, oder mit einem Worte die cabale so sich Gelehrte nennen/(wiewohl ich diese auch nicht ausschliesse) sondern alle die jenigen/die ihre von Gott verliehene Vernunft zu seinen Ehren und den allgemeinen menschlichen Heyl rechtschaffen anwenden/wenn es auch Soldaten/Kauff- und Handwercks-

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[...] – The other party probably has thought: [...] – I have no doubt that, through reading this passage according to the difference of both parties mentioned, diverging and contrasting thoughts have risen, of which I will shortly give my humble opinion, and I will leave the judgement thereupon to the impartial reader'.

<sup>38</sup> Thomasius Christian, *Historie Der Weißheit und Thorheit. Erster Theil/worinnen Der Erste/Andere/und Dritte Monat des 1693ten Jahres begriffen* (Halle, Salfeld: 1693), Preface to the reader 3 – 'I hope that the reader will not take this adversely, and, so he himself may contribute to this in the future, he does not abstain from lending me a helping hand. This is what I moderately ask him'.



Leute wären; Wenn sie nur die schädlichen præiudicia loß worden/und der Erforschung der Wahrheit mit einfältiger Klugheit nachstreben.<sup>39</sup>

‘Einfältige Klugheit’ – ‘simple prudence’ – and the destruction of harmful prejudices are here complementary to impartiality. These concepts are used to describe what one needs to design a process of gaining knowledge that no longer follows academic standards, since it is set outside of the academic realm. The critique of prejudices here is a core human capacity, and it is not scholars alone who are able to criticize prejudice. The Enlightenment trusts in the self-organizing process of critique, in the impartial and prejudice-free judgement of the public, and in the new form of controversy that makes the readers – who have the opportunity to find better judgements, independent of their education and academic status – impartial participants with equal rights in the processes of cognition. Although the reading public is said here to become an important factor in controversies, this does not mean that Thomasius’s idea of public communication implies a ‘democratic’ understanding of an equal participation of all people also in political issues. Thomasius insists on the advantage of the academics in general with regard to their knowledge, and he also insists on a pre-democratic political system.

However, the idea of the advantages of a public debate became seminal in the eighteenth century. Enabling people to argue with each other – under the changing circumstances of the rapid evolutions of the eighteenth century – became one of the core issues of the Enlightenment that needed to involve the public as a third, impartial party. Julien Offray de La Mettrie, probably the most radical materialistic thinker of the eighteenth century, explicitly sought the public critique: ‘Voilà mon Système, ou plutôt la Vérité, si je ne me trompe fort. [...] Dispute à présent qui voudra!’<sup>40</sup> The changes in the academic formats and the new role of the public led to a distinct change in the assumed function of impartiality which is transferred to the readers.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibidem 12 – ‘People who love wisdom – those people my writings are addressed to – are not just Doctores, Licentiati, Magistri, Baccalaurei, or, to put it in one word, not the guys that name themselves savants (although I do not exclude them), but all those who righteously use their God-given rationality for the sake of God’s honour and common human salvation – may they be soldiers, tradesmen, or craftsmen – if they only got rid of their harmful prejudices and if they only strive to explore the truth with simple prudence.’

<sup>40</sup> La Mettrie Julien Offray de, *L’homme machine. Die Maschine Mensch*, trans. and ed. C. Becker (Hamburg: 1990) 138 – ‘Here is my system, or rather the truth if I do not err. [...] Now, argue who wants to’.

I argue that the new idea of controversy contributes to the genesis of the Enlightenment; it catalyzes the new role of the public and the idea of impartiality. Controversy and impartial readers as participants in debate would play an important role in the Enlightenment. It is public discourse that, in the end, guarantees impartial judgements. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing summarizes the role of controversy in *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet*: 'Aber die Wahrheit, sagt man, gewinnt dabei so selten. [...] Es sei, daß noch durch keinen Streit die Wahrheit ausgemacht worden: so hat dennoch die Wahrheit bei jedem Streite gewonnen. Der Streit hat den Geist der Prüfung genähret.'<sup>41</sup> It is in this spirit of examination that impartiality will be located in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>41</sup> Lessing Gotthold Ephraim, *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet. Vorrede*, in Bohnen K. (ed.), *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Werke und Briefe: in zwölf Bänden*, vol. 6: *Werke 1767–1769* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1985) 715–778, here 717 – 'But the truth, one says, seldom wins in this. [...] But even if no controversy has ever found the truth, the truth has won in every controversy. Controversy has nurtured the spirit of examination'. See on this quote Braungart G., "Zur Rhetorik der Polemik in der Frühen Neuzeit", in Bosbach F. (ed.), *Feindbilder. Die Darstellung des Gegners in der politischen Publizistik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: 1992) 1–21, here 2.

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## OBJECTIVITY, IMPARTIALITY, AND HERMENEUTICS IN THE LEIBNIZIAN-WOLFFIAN DEBATES BETWEEN 1720 AND 1750

Hanns-Peter Neumann

In my paper I will not focus on the concrete debates between Wolffians and Newtonians on the one side, and between Wolffians and Pietist and Lutheran theologians on the other. The debates between Wolffians and Newtonians continued the controversies between Leibniz and Newton on physical and metaphysical subjects, i.e., among others, on the question of whether the mathematical notion of space can be transferred to reality, like Newton once maintained with his famous definition of space as *sensorium Dei*, or whether space is rather an organizing instrument of the human mind representing the simultaneous order of things in terms of spatial relations, as Leibniz and his follower Wolff claimed. These and other questions were intensively discussed in the famous correspondence between Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, who gave Newton his voice, in 1715/1716. This correspondence was of eminent importance for the later debates between the Newtonians at the Prussian court (like Maupertuis and others) and Wolff and the Leibniz-Wolffians in the 1740s. The struggles between Wolff and the Pietist theologians in Halle, who accused Wolff of fatalism and atheism, had a much stronger impact on Wolff's biography than his discussions with the Newtonian mathematicians. They eventually led to the exile of Wolff from Halle by the Prussian King Frederick Wilhelm I on pain of the death penalty in 1723. It was even generally forbidden to teach Wolffian philosophy at Prussian universities until the late 1730s, when the ban on Wolffian philosophy was lifted by Frederick Wilhelm I. In 1740, Wolff was fully rehabilitated by Frederick the Great and could then return to Halle, after he had taught logic and metaphysics at the University of Marburg since 1724 for about seventeen years.

Instead of describing the contexts, circumstances, and arguments of these debates in historical detail, I shall examine Christian Wolff's use of the word or concept of impartiality within these contexts and debates more systematically. I hope that this systematic approach will serve to

shed more light on impartiality and, perhaps, make a contribution to the prehistory of modern objectivity.<sup>1</sup>

In the first part of my paper, I will examine the semantic field of the word *impartiality* by also analysing the words and the wider textual context to which it is most connected in Wolff's writings – writings that are in part responses to severe criticism of his philosophy, or themselves contain criticism, for instance of the (mostly Newtonian) *Mathematici* and of the theologians.<sup>2</sup> It is thus my intent to survey the discursive contexts of the word and concept of 'impartiality' and its hermeneutical framework in the Leibnizian-Wolffian debates.

In the second part of my paper, I will try to show the coherence of Wolff's logical and hermeneutical epistemology with the concept of impartiality. In fact, as we will see, the notion of impartiality finds itself strongly connected to the idea of objective and subjective reason, an idea

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<sup>1</sup> It is not typical, particularly in the history of philosophy, to trace the scientific and rational concept of objectivity back to the early modern period, as for instance Julie Robin Solomon does: Solomon J.R., *Objectivity in the Making: Francis Bacon and the Politics of Inquiry* (Baltimore: 1998). Usually, the concept of objectivity is associated with the emergence of modernity, cf. Rescher N., *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: 1997), and recently Burge T., *Origins of Objectivity* (Oxford: 2010). Both Rescher and Burge discuss the philosophical issue of objectivity as rooted in the twentieth century, without mentioning, other than the Cartesian paradigm, potential early modern concepts of objectivity. Yet, as the title of his book indicates, Rescher discusses the idea of impersonal reason, which, as we will see, fits well with the notion of impartiality as developed by Wolff. The historians of science Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, however, suggest that objectivity should be conceived as a reiterated activity rather than as an abstract notion, and vote for tracing it back to the early modern period: see Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007) 51–54.

<sup>2</sup> Wolff continued the Leibniz-Newton controversy, which took place between 1705 and 1716, and represented Leibniz's position against the Newtonians, cf. Alexander H.G., "Introduction", in *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, ed. H.G. Alexander, 5th ed. (Manchester: 1998) ix–lv, for Wolff's controversy with the Newtonians see *ibid.*, xl–xlix; for the topics and this controversy see Khamara E.J., *Space, Time, and Theology in the Leibniz-Newton Controversy* (Frankfurt: 2006); Vailati E., *Leibniz and Clarke: A Study of Their Correspondence* (Oxford: 1997). The most famous controversy between Wolff, the Wolffians, and the adherents to Newtonianism is the debate on monads which emerged in 1746, cf. Bongie L.L., "Introduction", in Condillac Étienne Bonnot de, *Les Monadés*, ed. L.L. Bongie (Oxford: 1980) 19–36; Arana J., *La Mecánica y el Espíritu. Leonhard Euler y los orígenes del dualismo contemporáneo* (Madrid: 1994) 19–85; Clark W., "The Death of Metaphysics in Enlighthened Prussia", in Clark W. – Golinski J. – Schaffer S. (eds.), *The Sciences in Enlighthened Europe* (Chicago: 1999) 438–452; Neumann H.-P., "Zwischen Materialismus und Idealismus – Gottfried Ploucquet und die Monadologie", in Neumann H.-P. (ed.), *Der Monadenbegriff zwischen Spätrenaissance und Aufklärung* (Berlin: 2009) 203–270, on the debate on monads esp. 206–222; Neumann H.-P., "Den Monaden das Garaus machen'. Leonhard Euler und die Monadisten", in Bredekamp H. – Velmiski W. (eds.), *Mathesis & Graphé. Leonhard Euler und die Entfaltung der Wissenssysteme* (Berlin: 2010) 121–155.

that plays, for Wolff and the Wolffians, a crucial role for rightly understanding not only an author's intention, but also and especially for investigating and inventing truth.<sup>3</sup>

In the third part of my paper, I will illustrate Wolff's political or strategic reference to impartiality by paying attention to a concrete example which is taken from a debate between Wolff and Johann Franz Budde in 1724.

In order to examine Wolff's use of the words 'Unpartheylichkeit', 'unpartheyisch' or 'Unpartheyische', I refer to various writings by Leibniz, Wolff, and the Wolffians. The sources I mainly take into account for my purpose are the following:

1. The Leibniz-Clarke-correspondence, first edited by Samuel Clarke in 1717,<sup>4</sup> translated into German in 1720 by Heinrich Köhler,<sup>5</sup> and re-edited in a revised version by Kaspar Jakob Huth in 1740.<sup>6</sup> Both German translations include an important programmatic preface by Christian Wolff himself.
2. Wolff's annotations to his *German Metaphysics*, his *Anmerkungen*,<sup>7</sup> which he wrote in 1724 as a response to the harsh criticism of probably

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Neumann H.-P., "Hermeneutik im Wolffianismus", in Frank G. – Meier-Oeser S. (eds.), *Hermeneutik, Methodenlehre, Exegese* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 2011) 379–421.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke Samuel – Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm, *A Collection of Papers, Which Passed between the Late Learned Mr. Leibnitz, and Dr. Clarke, in the Years 1715 and 1716. Relating to the Principles Of Natural Philosophy and Religion* (London, for James Knapton: 1717).

<sup>5</sup> Clarke Samuel – Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm, *Merckwürdige Schrifften/Welche auf gnädigsten Befehl Jhro Königl. Hoheit der Cron-Princeßin von Wallis/Zwischen dem Herrn Baron von Leibnitz/und dem Herrn D. Clarcke/über besondere Materien der natürlichen Religion/in Frantzös. und Englischer Sprache gewechselt, und nunmehr mit einer Vorrede Christian Wolffens/Königlichen Preußischen Hof-Raths/P.P.O. und dermahlen Pro-Rectoris auf der Universität zu Halle/Nebst einer Antwort Herrn Ludwig Philipp Thümmigs/auf die fünffte Englische Schrifft/Wegen ihrer Wichtigkeit in teutscher Sprache heraus gegeben worden/von Heinrich Köhlern* (Jena, Meyer: 1720).

<sup>6</sup> Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm, *Des Freyherrn von Leibnitz Kleinere Philosophische Schriften: als I. Lehrsätze von den Monaden zur Erläut. der Theodicee II. Vertheidigung seiner Harmonie wider Baylen III. Geheimniß der Schöpfung nach seiner Dyadik IV. Mit Herrn D. Clarken gewechselte Schriften nebst V. Herrn Thümmigs Antwort auf Herrn Clarkens leztes Schreiben und VI. Herrn Prof. Köhlers Discurs über das Licht der Natur/mit einer Vorrede Herrn Christian Wolffs Dermahligen Königlichen Preussischen Hofraths P.P.O. und Prorektoris auf der Universität Halle ehemde von dem Jenaischen Philosophen Herrn Heinrich Köhler teutsch übersetzt nun auf das neue übersehen von M. Caspar Jacob Huth der teutschen Gesellschaft in Jena Senior* (Jena, Mayer: 1740).

<sup>7</sup> Wolff Christian, *Anmerckungen über die vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, zu besserem Verstande und bequemerem Gebrauch derselben heraus gegeben von Christian Wolffem* (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä: 1724). Since there are different revised editions of the *Anmerckungen*, which were



his most important German book, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt* ('Rational Thoughts on God, the World, and the Human Soul, and of all things in General'), usually abbreviated as *Deutsche Metaphysik* ('German Metaphysics'), first published in 1720.<sup>8</sup>

3. Wolff's answer of 1724 to Johann Franz Budde's criticism of Wolff's philosophy: *Herrn Buddes Bedencken über die Wolffianische Philosophie mit Anmerkungen erläutert von Christian Wolff*.<sup>9</sup> Budde was a Lutheran theologian from Jena who argued, together with Joachim Lange from Halle, fiercely against Wolff. He, like his colleagues in Halle, accused Wolff of providing arguments for atheism, naturalism and fatalism rather than against them.<sup>10</sup> It seems that the *Bedencken* were published without Budde's admission, the publication being the result of an intrigue by Lange.<sup>11</sup>

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published together with the *Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt*, I will also refer to later editions.

<sup>8</sup> Wolff Christian, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt* (Halle, Rengerische Buchhandlung: 1720).

<sup>9</sup> Budde Johann Franz – Wolff Christian, *Herrn D. Joh. Francisci Buddei S.S. Theol. P.P.O. zu Jena Bedencken über die Wolffianische Philosophie mit Anmerkungen erläutert von Christian Wolff* (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä – Hort: 1724). Before that Budde's *Bedencken* first appeared in Jena in the same year: *Bedencken über die Wolffianische Philosophie, nebst einer Historischen Einleitung zur gegenwärtigen Controversie* (Freyburg [i.e. Jena], Schmaltz: 1724).

<sup>10</sup> For the debates between Wolff, the Wolffians, and Pietist theologians, which finally led to Wolff's banishment from Halle, cf. Bianco B., "Libertà e fatalismo. Sulla polemica tra Joachim Lange e Christian Wolff", *Verifiche* 15 (1986) 43–89; Clark, "The Death of Metaphysics" 427–432; Holloran J.R., *Professors of Enlightenment at the University of Halle 1690–1730* (Ph.D., University of Virginia: 2000) 1–29, 273–364; Beutel A., "Causa Wolffiana. Die Vertreibung Wolffs aus Preußen 1723 als Kulminationspunkt des theologisch-politischen Konflikts zwischen Halleschem Pietismus und Aufklärungsphilosophie", in Beutel A., *Reflektierte Religion. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Protestantismus* (Tübingen: 2007) 125–169; Sträter U., "Wolffs Gegner Joachim Lange im Kontext der Theologischen Fakultät Halle", in Rudolph O.-P. – Stolzenberg J. (eds.), *Christian Wolff und die europäische Aufklärung*, 5 vols. (Hildesheim – Zürich – New York: 2007–2010), vol. II, 77–96; Schmidt-Biggemann W., "Metaphysik und Provokation: Christian Wolffs Philosophie in der Ideenpolitik der Frühaufklärung", in Rudolph – Stolzenberg (eds.), *Christian Wolff* (Hildesheim – Zürich – New York: 2010), vol. V, 303–318.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ludovici Carl Günther, *Ausführlicher Entwurf einer vollständigen Historie der Wolffischen Philosophie* [...] (Leipzig, Löwe: 1737) 205–207 (First Part, § 265). For the anthropological implications of Wolff's debate with Budde and Lange see Borchers S., *Die Erzeugung des 'Ganzen Menschen'. Zur Entstehung von Anthropologie und Ästhetik an der Universität Halle im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin – New York: 2011) 67–74.



4. Wolff's justification and explanation of his own writings, the *Ausführliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Schriften*, first published in 1726.<sup>12</sup>
5. A treatise by Wolff which deals with the usefulness of the mathematical method for all sciences, including theology, law, medicine, as well as for everyday life, first published in Latin as preface of the first part of his *Elementa Matheseos Universae* in 1713.<sup>13</sup> This preface was translated into German by the Wolffian Gottlieb Friedrich Hagen in 1737.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Hagen himself wrote an appendix based on Wolff's *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, in which he also deployed the notion 'unpartheyisch'.<sup>15</sup>
6. Last but not least, I will refer to two Leibnizians or Wolffians, Israel Gottlieb Canz and Johann Gustav Reinbeck, who represent so-called theological Wolffianism and play an important role in applying Leibniz's and Wolff's logical method to dogmatic theology and biblical hermeneutics.<sup>16</sup> In their explication of the Leibniz-Wolffian hermeneutical logic, we find the very interesting differentiation between 'objektive Vernunft' (objective reason) and 'individuelle Vernunft', or 'subjektive Vernunft' (individual or subjective reason). The latter works 'subjectively', while the former stands for the transindividual, true order and nexus of all things and events, as thought and invented by the divine being, by God.

<sup>12</sup> Wolff Christian, *Ausführliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Schriften die er in deutscher Sprache von den verschiedenen Theilen der Welt-Weisheit heraus gegeben* (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä – Hort: 1726); a second revised edition was published in 1733.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff Christian, "Praefatio", in idem, *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, vol. 1 (Halle, Renger: 1713) fols. b2<sup>r</sup>–c4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Wolff Christian, "Wie die Meßkunst den menschlichen Verstand ausnehmend bessere", in idem, *Gesammelte kleine philosophische Schriften, Welche meistens aus dem Lateinischen übersezet* [...], Third Part (Halle, Rengersche Buchhandlung: 1737) 357–424.

<sup>15</sup> Hagen Gottlieb Friedrich, "Fortsetzung der aus dem Verfahren der Meßkundigen hergeleiteten Regeln", in Wolff, *Gesammelte kleine philosophische Schriften* 425–496.

<sup>16</sup> For Reinbeck see Neumann, "Hermeneutik" 409–414; Lorenz S., "Theologischer Wolffianismus: Das Beispiel Johann Gustav Reinbeck", in Rudolph O.P. – Stolzenberg J. (eds.), *Christian Wolff* (Hildesheim – Zürich – New York: 2010), vol. V, 103–124; for Canz see Neumann, "Hermeneutik" 414–421; Neumann H.-P., "Israel Gottlieb Canz' gnadentheologische Hermeneutik und Leibniz' 'Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison'", in Li W. – Schmidt-Biggemann W. (eds.), *300 Jahre Essais de Théodicée – Rezeption und Transformation*, *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa* 36 (Stuttgart: 2013) 97–114.

# 1. *The Semantic and Discursive Field of Impartiality and its Hermeneutical Framework*

In combination with which words does the term *impartiality* occur and in what broader textual context does the word *Unparteilichkeit* and its derivatives appear in Leibniz's and in Wolff's writings? In the concluding part of Leibniz's fifth letter to Clarke, Leibniz uses the expression 'personnes raisonnables et impartiales',<sup>17</sup> in the German translation rendered as 'verständige und unpartheyische Personen' ('reasonable and impartial persons').<sup>18</sup> This is also the expression which Wolff's writings use most frequently in appeals to impartiality, namely: 'Verständige und Unpartheyische' ('the reasonable and the impartial'), as used in the *Annotations* to his *German Metaphysics*,<sup>19</sup> or 'verständige und unpartheyische Männer' ('reasonable and impartial men'),<sup>20</sup> 'verständige und unpartheyische Leute' ('reasonable and impartial people'),<sup>21</sup> 'verständige und unpartheyische Liebhaber der Wahrheit' ('reasonable and impartial lovers of truth'),<sup>22</sup> 'verständige und unpartheyische Leser' ('reasonable and impartial readers'),<sup>23</sup> 'verständige und unpartheyische Commissarii' ('reasonable and impartial commissioners').<sup>24</sup> In some cases we find also a term other than *verständige*, as for example 'unpartheyische und gewissenhafte Theologi' ('impartial and conscientious theologians'),<sup>25</sup> or the word *unpartheyisch* applied to a specific sort of person, as for example 'unpartheyische Potentaten' ('impartial potentates') as mediators between opposing parties involved in a political conflict.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm, *Streitschriften zwischen Leibniz und Clarke 1715–1716*, in idem, *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, vol. 7 (Berlin: 1890) 420.

<sup>18</sup> Leibniz, *Kleinere Philosophische Schriften*, ed. C.J. Huth (Jena, Mayer: 1740) 272.

<sup>19</sup> Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 288 (§ 193), 320 (§ 205), 579 (§ 389).

<sup>20</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä – Hort: 1733) 313, § 114.

<sup>21</sup> Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 85 (§ 45).

<sup>22</sup> Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 427 (§ 276).

<sup>23</sup> Wolff Christian, *Metafisica Tedesca con le Annotazioni Alla Metafisica Tedesca. Testo tedesco a fronte*, ed. R. Ciafardone (Milan: 2003) 28 (preface to the third edition of the *German Metaphysics*, dated 21 March 1725).

<sup>24</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 632.

<sup>25</sup> Wolff Christian, "Ausführliche Beantwortung der ungegründeten Beschuldigungen Hrn D. Langens, die er auf Befehl Jhro Königl. Majest. in Preussen entworfen", in idem, *Gesammelte kleine philosophische Schriften*, part 4 (Halle, Rengersche Buchhandlung: 1739) 278.

<sup>26</sup> Wolff Christian, *Vernünftige Gedancken von dem Gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen Und insonderheit Dem gemeinen Wesen*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt/Leipzig, Renger: 1736) 611.

In fact, by deploying this expression, Wolff, and also Leibniz, in most cases give it the character of a rhetorical appeal. By using it, Wolff obviously addresses the reader, or at least a person who, for whatever reason, professional or otherwise, reads Wolff's writings from the perspective of someone who has to compare different argumentative positions or opinions in order to re-evaluate them from an unprejudiced point of view. Modifying Leibniz's expression 'personnes raisonnables et impartiales', Wolff also calls upon 'alle Unpartheyischen' ('all impartial people'),<sup>27</sup> the 'unpartheyische Welt' ('the impartial world')<sup>28</sup> and 'unpartheyische Augen' ('impartial eyes').<sup>29</sup> Only rarely does Wolff employ the singular 'ein Unpartheyischer'.<sup>30</sup> If used as an adverb, then it is for the most part used in connection with 'erwägen': 'unpartheyisch erwägen' ('to deliberate or weigh up impartially').<sup>31</sup> In another case we find the expression 'unpartheyische Beurteilung seiner selbst und anderer' ('impartial self-evaluation and evaluation of others'), which does not stem originally from Wolff, but comes from his translator and adherent Gottlieb Friedrich Hagen.<sup>32</sup>

If we focus on the Latin use of the word *impartialitas* or *impartialis*, then we notice, for example in Wolff's *Jus naturae methodo scientifica pertractatum*, that Wolff brings into opposition the expressions 'impartialis ex veritate' (impartial due to truth) and 'partialis ex utilitate' (partial due to self-interest),<sup>33</sup> the latter implying that self-interest forces truth into

<sup>27</sup> Wolff Christian, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt Anderer Theil bestehend in ausführlichen Anmerkungen* [...], 3rd ed. (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä – Hort: 1733) 433 (§ 265): '[...] so hat man doch darauf nicht Acht, sondern bleibt zu grosser Bestürtzung aller Unpartheyischen bey der Verkehrung meiner Worte'.

<sup>28</sup> Wolff, *Metaphisica* 30 (preface to the third edition); idem, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken* [...] *Anmerkungen* 20, § 19.

<sup>29</sup> Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 173 (§ 124): 'Bey der Nachwelt aber, die mit unpartheyischen Augen die Sache ansiehet [...]'. Budde – Wolff, *Bedencken, Vorrede*, fol. 2r; Wolff Christian, *Nöthige Zugabe zu den Anmerkungen über Herrn D. Buddens Bedencken von der Wolffischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt a. M., Andreä – Hort: 1724) 104.

<sup>30</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 357; idem, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken* [...] *Anmerkungen* 181 (§ 106).

<sup>31</sup> idem, *Anmerkungen* 338 (§ 216); idem, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken* [...] *Anmerkungen* 321 (§ 192): '[...] denn was wird die Nachwelt dazu sagen, die alles unpartheyischer zu erwegen pfelet?'

<sup>32</sup> Hagen, "Fortsetzung" 447.

<sup>33</sup> Wolff Christian, *Jus Naturae Methodo Scientifica Pertractatum*, pars quinta (Halle, Rengersche Buchhandlung: 1745) 641 (§ 936): 'impartialis ex veritate', 640 (§ 925): in the case of a person being partial, this person is defined as someone who 'studiosus partium non ex veritate, sed ex utilitate ejus, cui favet, de re controversa statuit'. A partial person's

exile ('veritate in exilium pulsa'),<sup>34</sup> which curiously enough seems to correspond with Wolff's experience of himself being forced into exile in 1723 due to the supposed atheism of his philosophy. This correspondence is certainly not coincidental: Wolff actually compares his banishment from Halle with Galileo's famous trial in which, as Wolff states, the 'freedom of philosophy' was harshly restricted.<sup>35</sup> He describes both the denouncement of his philosophy by Pietist theologians at the Prussian Court and the denouncement of Galileo's astronomical teachings at the Roman Inquisition in detail, in order to make it possible for an impartial person to judge on his own the analogy maintained by Wolff.<sup>36</sup>

We might thus now define the semantic field of impartiality more closely: we learn that impartiality and reason belong together, as well as impartiality and truth. Impartiality appears to be strongly associated with the general human ability of reasoning, understanding, considering, judging, and evaluating. 'Impartial eyes' ('unpartheyische Augen') are supposed to be able to perceive guided by the love of truth and reason alone. Moreover, we learn that impartial persons constitute a world of impartiality, which seems to be a sort of independent institution like a court of law or an area inhabited by those persons, who are inspired by love of justice and by finding and investigating truths. But this court is also seen as a future one: posterity. In this context, it is not surprising that Wolff describes himself explicitly as loving peace and truth: 'Ich liebe Wahrheit und Friede'.<sup>37</sup> It thus seems evident that Wolff conceives of himself as an inhabitant of the impartial world.

But let us now turn to the question of the precise framework of Leibniz's and Wolff's use of impartiality, since the notions of truth, world, reason, judgement, evaluation, and consideration have a specific meaning in Wolff's and Leibniz's philosophy. In order to describe this framework, I will now take a closer look at the broader textual context in which the word *Unpartheylichkeit* and its derivatives occur.

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norm of acting is, as Wolff says, always ultimately self-interest: '[...] ut norma agendi sit propria utilitas'.

<sup>34</sup> Wolff, *Jus naturae* 641 (§ 925).

<sup>35</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 624.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem 627: 'Ich will demnach ihr Verfahren [*meaning the procedure of his Pietist opponents*] auf eben die Weise beschreiben, wie das vorige [*the Inquisition against Galileo*], damit ein Unpartheyischer selbst urtheilen kan.' 'I therefore want to describe their procedure [*the procedure of Wolff's Pietist opponents*] in the same way as the one I already described before, in order to make it possible for an impartial person to judge by himself'.

<sup>37</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 672.

In Leibniz's fifth letter to Clarke, for instance, being a 'personne raisonnaable et impartiale' implies not only that the 'personne raisonnaable' must acknowledge the two basic principles of logic, reason, and understanding – the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of non-contradiction – but also that the 'personne raisonnaable et impartiale' knows how to adopt these principles properly.<sup>38</sup> Leibniz, and also Wolff, claim that anyone who dismisses the universality of these principles must be considered as incapable of correct argumentation. From this it follows that whoever is incapable of correct reasoning cannot and must not be ranked among those who belong to the world of rational and impartial persons.

Furthermore, logical competence based on the capability of consciously making use of the two mentioned principles is seen by Wolff and the Wolffians as the main natural faculty of human knowledge, which enables human beings to think about themselves and others.<sup>39</sup> It also enables them to become aware of what they know and of what they do not know. While knowing leads to a rational, well-grounded judgement, the awareness of one's own lack of knowledge and competence leads to the famous *epoché*, the abstention from judging in order to avoid false and unjust judgements.<sup>40</sup> Well-grounded judgements based on competence, expertise, proof, and true conviction – rather than on memory, memorizing, and an adherence to authority, which are seen as principles of a *bona fide*-attitude – and honest self-assessment and *epoché*, are, from Wolff's perspective, indispensable rules regulating the impartial world.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Leibniz, *Streitschriften* 419 (§ 127): 'Tout le monde ne s'en est il point servi en mille occasions?'; 420 (§ 130): 'Et je crois que des personnes raisonnables et impartiales m'accorderont, que d'avoir réduit son adversaire à nier ce Principe [*de la raison suffisante*], c'est l'avoir mené ad absurdum'.

<sup>39</sup> Hagen, "Fortsetzung" 447.

<sup>40</sup> While Bayle's *epoché* is based on a sceptical or Pyrrhonist epistemology, Wolff's concept of *epoché* rests upon self-knowledge implying the knowledge of one's own lack of competence. On Bayle, see also Anne Eusterschulte's contribution in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 289–290 (§ 193): 'Wenn in andern Disciplinen ein jeder gleichfalls dasjenige/was er gelehrtet wird/nicht bloß ins Gedächtniß fassete/sondern recht verstehen und gründlich erweisen lernet; so würde sich keiner zum Richter in Sachen aufwerffen/die er zu beurtheilen nicht in dem Stande wäre. Er würde vielmehr sich des Urtheiles entweder gar begeben/oder möglichen Fleiß anwenden/daß er sich vorher in den Stand setzte ein vernünftiges Urtheil zu fällen/damit er bey Verständigen und Unpartheyischen bestehen kan. Ich dancke GOtt/daß ich darüber hinaus bin/und gar wohl erkenne/was ich nicht weiß/und was ich zu beurtheilen nicht in dem Stande bin [...]'. – 'If in other disciplines everyone not only retains in memory what he was taught, but also learns to understand it properly and demonstrate it thoroughly, no-one would judge what he is not capable of judging. Instead he would abstain from judgement, or try to learn

Wolff assumes, referring to his own experience and biography, that his opponents disobeyed these rules and therefore perverted 'my words', 'my book', 'my writings' – a misrepresentation of Wolff's philosophy resulting from improper reading, insufficient conceptual differentiation and from the lack of methodical experience, that is, the missing application of demonstrative procedures, as Wolff emphasizes.<sup>42</sup>

This act of improper reading, itself a result of disrespectful inattention, disturbs 'all impartial persons', 'alle Unpartheyischen' (Wolff uses the term 'Bestürzung').<sup>43</sup> Perverse readings give rise to wrong conclusions which are then falsely identified with the author's intention, and hence are, as Wolff points out, merely fictitious.<sup>44</sup> Wolff argues that if such wrong conclusions are used officially or politically against the misrepresented author, the whole process of misunderstanding causes 'Consequenien=Macherey' or

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assiduously what is necessary to become capable of rendering a rational judgement, in order not to fail in the eyes of reasonable and impartial persons. I thank God that I am beyond this, and that I already know what I don't know and what I am not capable of judging [...]; Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* (Frankfurt, Andreä: 1733) 549: 'Wo er nun findet, daß es ihm entweder an Begriffen, oder an allgemeinen Urtheilen, die gehöriger Weise eingerichtet sind, oder auch an der Einsicht in die allgemeine Wahrheiten fehlet, dadurch man sie als Wahrheit erkennet; da enthält er sich seines Urtheiles [...]'.

<sup>42</sup> Wolff, *Metafisica* 8 (Preface to the first edition, dated December 23, 1719): 'Ich wünsche aber auch denen, die es nöthig haben, Aufrichtigkeit, damit sie nicht bloß mit der Absicht darüber kommen meine Worte zu verkehren, und mir ungereimte und gefährliche Meinungen aufzubürden!'; Wolff, *Anmerkungen* 113–114 (§ 65): 'Man darff bey mir nicht den Verstand meiner Wörter aus dem Contextu oder dem Zusammenhange des Systematis suchen, wie man gethan zu haben vorgiebet, wenn man durch falsche Auslegungen meine Worte verkehret: Ich habe nirgends ein Wort gebraucht, dessen Bedeutung ich nicht vorher in seine Schrancken genau eingeschlossen hätte. Und wer ist sorgfältiger, als ich, daß er jederzeit bey der einmahl gesetzten Erklärung des Wortes verbleibet, und nicht im geringsten davon abweicht?'; ibidem 399–400 (§ 265): 'Sie haben mein Buch niemals mit Application durchgelesen/daß sie es hätten verstehen lernen [...] mit wie weniger Application man meine Schrifften lieset/und doch Richter davon seyn will'; idem, "Sicheres Mittel wider ungegründete Verleumdungen, wie denselben am besten abzuheiffen", in idem, *Gesammelte kleine philosophische Schrifften*, fourth part, 442: 'Wir geniessen zwar auf unserer Universitaet die Freyheit zu sentiren, und ich bediene mich auch derselben. Allein diese gehet nicht dahin, daß man anderer ihre Schrifften nach seinem Geschmacke verkehren und reformiren will [...]'; idem, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 72: 'Wie wohl wäre es, wenn man so viel Fleiß anwendete, meine Schrifften zu verstehen, als zu verkehren [...]'.

<sup>43</sup> Wolff, *Der Vernünftigen Gedancken* [...] *Anmerkungen* 433 (§ 265): 'Und unerachtet die Sache mehr als einmal erinnert worden, daß Vis und Facultas nicht einerley ist; so hat man doch darauf nicht Acht, sondern bleibet zu grosser Bestürzung aller Unpartheyischen bey der Verkehrung meiner Worte'.

<sup>44</sup> Wolff speaks of 'erdichteter Verstand', cf., "Von dem Verbrechen gegen einen Weltweisen", in idem, *Gesammelte kleine philosophische Schrifften*, fifth part (Halle, Rengersche Buchhandlung: 1740) 166.



'Ketzermacherei': turning authors into heretics.<sup>45</sup> This sort of intellectual intrigue is driven, as Wolff points out, by the negative affects of hate, vanity and grudges, while understanding and impartiality are based on love, love of truth and the honest willingness to communicate.<sup>46</sup>

Wolff, who had been forced into exile in 1723, considers himself a victim of such improper and perverse readings of his writings, which led his opponents to denounce him at the Royal Court in Berlin with far reaching consequences for his further career: Frederick Wilhelm I decided that Wolff had to leave Prussia within 48 hours on pain of death. Wolff left Halle together with his wife and became Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy in Marburg. In 1740, he was rehabilitated by Frederick the Great and then returned to Halle triumphantly.<sup>47</sup>

Let us now look more closely at what it takes to be a rational and hence impartial person. Wolff points out that it is mathematics and philosophy which substantially teach reasoning as a condition of impartiality;<sup>48</sup> to be more specific, Wolff is quite confident that his own philosophy and logic are the proper explication of man's natural way of thinking:

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<sup>45</sup> Since improper readings are seen by Wolff as important historical facts which, if established, lead to a wrong valuation of philosophical and theological positions, Wolff suggests that the history of philosophy as well as the history of heresy should be revised, cf. Wolff Christian, *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica* (Frankfurt – Leipzig, Renger: 1728) 645 (§ 907): 'Immo eadem de causa fieri solet, ut viris summis ab hominibus rerum sublimium parum peritis et a profunda cognitione alienis errores admodum pueriles imputentur. Novum hic habemus argumentum, quo fides historiae philosophicae communis labefactatur, supra in dubium vocata. Nec iis idem inutile erit, qui historiam haereticorum non satis certam esse existimant, ubi perversa subinde voluntas in causa est, ut ab altero sane ac prudenter, vel saltem non malo animo dicta in perversum sensum trahantur'. For the use of 'Consequentien=Macher' and 'Ketzer=macher' see Wolff Christian, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von den Kräfften des menschlichen Verstandes und Jhrem richtigen Gebrauch in Erkänntniß der Wahrheit* [...], 8th ed. (Halle, Renger: 1736) 209–210; Wolff, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken* [...] *Anmerckungen* 6<sup>r-v</sup> (preface to the second edition): Wolff speaks of 'Ketzer= und Atheisten=Macher'.

<sup>46</sup> Wolff, *Anmerckungen* 338 (§ 216): 'Hätten meine Feinde eine aufrichtige Intention gehabt, und mit mir mündlich in der Liebe conferiren wollen [...]'; ibidem 339: 'Wie viel ist Eitelkeit unter den Gedächtniß=Gelehrten/und wie übel stehet es um die Wissenschaften/wo sie die Oberhand haben!'; ibidem 401 (§ 265): 'Wenn man auf eine honetten und verständigen Leuten geziemende Weise verfahren/und nicht/an statt der Liebe zur Wahrheit seinen bitteren Haß verrathen will [...]'].

<sup>47</sup> For a short survey of Wolff's biography see Drechsler W., "Christian Wolff (1679–1754): A Biographical Essay", *European Journal of Law and Economics* 4 (1987) 111–128, esp. 113–14, 116–17.

<sup>48</sup> Wolff's *Wie die Meßkunst den menschlichen Verstand ausnehmend bessere* can be interpreted as an emphatic eulogy on the educational usefulness of the *mos geometricus*.

Denn gleichwie ich gewiesen, daß man in den mathematischen Demonstrationen auf eben die Art dencket, wie man im gemeinen Leben bey dem, was wir täglich vornehmen, die Gedancken auseinander herleitet; so ist auch gewiß, daß weder in den höheren Facultäten, noch in Künsten eine andere Art zu dencken vorkommet. Wer sich demnach eine Sache ordentlich vorstellen; davon gehörig urteilen und raisonieren will; der muß bey den Regeln verbleiben, die ich in der Logick erkläret und so glücklich auf die Probe gestellet.<sup>49</sup>

In consequence, Wolff supposes that one can be considered as capable of reasoning and judging alone (without having to accept in good faith what is found in others' writings, teachings, and sayings) only if educated in Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy and logic. Reliance on authorities obviously hinders the investigation of truth, as Wolff maintains, as well as scientific progress.<sup>50</sup> He argues that his opponents, most of them theologians, are bound by adherence to authority and thus cannot be given scientific credibility.

Even though Wolff emphasizes the usefulness of mathematics for the education of human reasoning, he claims that only the transfer of the demonstrative mathematical method to the ontological and metaphysical analysis of words and notions provides progress in finding truth.<sup>51</sup> On that condition, the self-evaluation of mathematicians that they alone would

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<sup>49</sup> Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 531 (§ 192): 'Since I showed that in mathematical demonstrations we think in the same way as in daily life's business by deducing our ongoing thoughts from our previous ones, it is absolutely certain that neither in the higher faculties nor in the arts another way of thinking takes place. In consequence, whoever wants to perceive a thing in an orderly manner and judge it and think about it properly, must by necessity follow the rules which I explicated in my logic and which I successfully proved'. See also *ibidem* 557: '[...] so habe ich sowohl in dem Lexico Mathematico unter dem Worte *Demonstratio*, als auch nach diesem in der Metaphysick gezeigt, daß die natürliche Art zu denken, die wir alle Augenblicke brauchen, nach eben den Regeln geschehe, nach welchen der mathematische Vortrag eingerichtet wird, ja ich habe ferner gewiesen, daß die künstliche Logick nichts anders sey als eine deutliche Erklärung der natürlichen, und der mathematische Vortrag in einer steten Ausübung derselben bestehe'.

<sup>50</sup> As mentioned before, reliance on authorities suggests a strong inclination towards learning by memorizing: see Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht* 533: 'Wer nun diese Mittel versäümet [*meaning the methods of logic and mathematical demonstration*], der muß alles auf das bloße Gedächtnis ankommen lassen und dasjenige, was er höret, oder liest, bloß auswendig lernen. Er muß alles auf guten Glauben annehmen und kan nicht vor sich urtheilen, was wahr, oder falsch ist'. For this reason Wolff calls his opponents, mainly the Pietist theologians from Halle, but also Johann Franz Budde from Jena, '*patres ignorantiae*', cf. *ibidem* 609.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Wolff Christian, "Herrn Christian Wolffens [...] Vorrede Der erstern Ausgabe der Leibntzischen und Clarkischen Streitschriften vorgefügt", in Leibniz, *Kleinere Philosophische Schriften*, ed. C.J. Huth (Jena, Mayer: 1740) fols. a1<sup>v</sup>–a2<sup>r</sup>.



provide the elementary doctrines of truth – ‘sie allein hätten die Grundlehren der Wahrheit’<sup>52</sup> – is judged by Wolff to be pure hubris. Mathematicians, as Wolff says, are tempted to use their imagination beyond the field of mathematics.<sup>53</sup> They take the notions of space and time, as imagined mathematically, for reality.<sup>54</sup> But actually, as Wolff affirms, space and time are ontological and metaphysical concepts.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, correct reasoning presupposes the moderation of the faculty of imagination. Since only correct reasoning makes impartiality possible, impartiality requires the moderation of imagination by reason. Or in other words: neither mathematics nor theology provide the necessary tools to act and judge impartially, only metaphysics and logic do.

<sup>52</sup> Wolff, “Wie die Meßkunst den menschlichen Verstand ausnehmend bessere” 369.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Wolff, “Herrn Christian Wolffens [...] Vorrede” fols. b2<sup>v</sup>–b3<sup>r</sup>: ‘Unerachtet die metaphysischen Wahrheiten von einer ganz andern Beschaffenheit sind, als die mathematischen; so daß auch bloße Mathematici dazu nicht aufgelegt sind, sondern wenn sie darüber kommen, gemeinlich nur leeren Einbildungen nachgehen [...]’.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Wolff’s Letter to Ernst Christoph Count of Manteuffel, Halle, June 23, 1747, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Ms 0347, fol. 228<sup>r-v</sup>: ‘Er [*Johann Heinrich Gottlieb Justi, an adherent of the Newtonian philosophy and an opponent of the Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy*] nimmt an, daß dasjenige, was wir vermittelst der Sinnen von den Körpern erkennen, realitäten, und keine phaenomena sind, die in etwas andres ihren Grund haben. [...] Er bedencket auch nicht, was vor Widersprüche, und unauflösliche Knoten daraus erfolgen, wenn man den geometrischen Begriff von dem Körper, dem Raume und der Bewegung vor Realitäten annimmt, wie aus demjenigen zu ersehen, was von der divisione continui, tanquam labyrintho philosophorum, und von der causa und communicatione motus, geschrieben worden. Und diese haben schon vor uhralten Zeiten verschiedene Weltweisen bewogen, auf die monades als phaenomenorum fontes zu fallen’.

<sup>55</sup> For the Leibnizians’ and Wolffians’ critique of the Newtonian concept of space which they connected to the Behmenists’ theory of spirit and space see Neumann H.-P., “Die Rezeption des englischen Böhmenismus im Leibniz-Wolffianismus (Canz, Ploucquet, Schelling sen.)”, in Kühlmann W. – Vollhardt F. (eds.), *Offenbarung und Episteme. Zur europäischen Wirkung Jakob Böhmes im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin – New York: 2012) 479–511, esp. 494–505; see also Baker J.T., *An Historical and Critical Examination of English Space and Time Theories from Henry More to Bishop Berkeley* (Bronxville/New York: 1930); Sander F., *Die Entwicklung der Raumtheorien in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Halle: 1931); Jammer M., *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics* (Cambridge/MA: 1954); Copenhaver B.P., “Jewish Theologies of Space in the Scientific Revolution: Henry More, Joseph Raphson, Isaac Newton and their Predecessors”, *Annals of Science* 37 (1980) 489–548. For Leibniz’s metaphysical concept of space and time see amongst others Futch M.J., *Leibniz’s Metaphysics of Time and Space* (Dordrecht: 2008); De Risi V., *Geometry and Monadology: Leibniz’s ‘Analysis situs’ and Philosophy of Space* (Basel: 2007); Khamara, E.J., *Space, Time, and Theology in the Leibniz-Newton Controversy* (Frankfurt a.M.: 2006).

2. *The Epistemological Framework: The Connection between Truth, Objective and Subjective Reason, and Impartiality*

The opposite to the negative hermeneutics of perverse reading is the application of the principle of charity (the Latin technical term is *aequus*, the German technical term in the eighteenth century is *billig*) and the impartial application of Wolff's logical and hermeneutical method in order to understand an author's words, meaning, and intention correctly. Yet though it seems so at first sight, it is not Wolff's aim to reconstruct an individual author's intention. It is mainly the quest for truth that, for Wolff, must be taken as the basis of hermeneutics – and, we should add, of impartiality.<sup>56</sup>

This leads us to ask what the notion of truth means in Wolff's metaphysics; indeed, what is truth? Unfortunately, Wolff's theory of truth is anything but simple; nevertheless, I will try to explain it in as few words as possible. Truth is for Wolff dependent on the order, regularity, and system of all existing (i.e. real) things, as well as possible things. He defines truth as the order within the changes affecting all things, or as the regularity of the ongoing changes of all things: 'Und ist demnach die Wahrheit nichts anderes als die Ordnung in den Veränderungen der Dinge'.<sup>57</sup> Wolff adds that we are able to perceive the order or regularity within the ongoing changes of things only by observing and noticing similarities. Since Wolff defines order as the similarity of the manifold in its series or succession, 'Ähnlichkeit des mannigfaltigen in dessen Folge auf und nach einander',<sup>58</sup> the quest for truth implies that we have to determine the similarity between the changing states of things themselves as well as of their nexus or relation, which represents the momentary state of the world. At this moment the two principles, which constitute our perception and reasoning, come into play: the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of non-contradiction. These principles serve to order, dispose, and manage our perceptions of ourselves and of things different from ourselves. By the principle of sufficient reason, we detect the intrinsic coherence, order, and causality within the succession of perceptions, things, and their states. By the principle of non-contradiction, we exclude the possibility that two different and opposite states of things or perceptions can exist at one and

<sup>56</sup> For Wolff's hermeneutics and the principle of equity see Neumann, "Hermeneutik im Wolffianismus" 379–394.

<sup>57</sup> Wolff, *Metafisica* 148 (§ 142).

<sup>58</sup> Wolff, *Metafisica* 140 (§ 132).

the same time.<sup>59</sup> Wolff presupposes that the real order of things corresponds more or less with the rational disposition of our perceptions. For approaching certain knowledge of the order of things, it is necessary to determine the causality of states and events. If a specific state, event, perception, sentence, or thing fits the rational and causal order of things, it is true. The importance of the paradigm of the demonstrative logical and hermeneutical method consists in mirroring the rational order of things and perceptions scientifically.

Truth in an absolute sense, however, would imply the knowledge of all past, present, and future states of things and events in their regularity, rationality, and causality. Wolff ascribes this absolute knowledge to the initiator and *prima causa* of the order of things, to God. At this point in the argument Leibniz's theory of infinite monadic standpoints and perspectives enters the scene. Even though the correct use of reasoning and its principles promises certain knowledge and a guaranteed way to truth, human beings, unlike God, keep being restricted and limited to their points of view as well as limited in applying the instruments of reason.<sup>60</sup> Otherwise, human beings could never be mistaken in what they do and in what they think. In order to indicate the difference between absolute knowledge of the order of things, independent of any individual perspective (even independent of the existence of humanity), and the relative knowledge of the order of things as approached by monadic standpoints, Israel Gottlieb Canz, a Leibniz-Wolffian and theologian in Tübingen, provided the notions of reason, or *ratio*, that works subjectively, and objective reason, or 'ratio objectiva', which contains the order of things beyond the individual limitations of understanding.<sup>61</sup> The Berlin provost Johann Gustav Reinbeck translated these Latin notions into German: subjective

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wolff, *Metafisica* 60–80 (§§ 1–30): Wolff explicates how from the perception of ourselves and of other things without us the two main principles, the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of non-contradiction, can be deduced.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Leibniz G.W., *Monadologie*, ed. H. Hecht, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: 2005) 32–33 (§§ 41–42), 40–43 (§ 57).

<sup>61</sup> Canz Israel Gottlieb, *Philosophiae Leibnitianae et Wolffianae usus in theologia, per praecipua fidei capita* (Frankfurt/Leipzig, [s.n.]: 1728) 34: 'Est enim ratio collustrata nil aliud, quam perspicentia nexus inter veritates revelatas. Illuminatio haec posset vocari obiectiva'. Canz Israel Gottlieb, *Philosophiae Wolffianae ex Græcis et Latinis auctoribus illustratae* [...] (Frankfurt – Leipzig, [s.n.]: 1737) 898–899: 'Caeterum ex superioribus facile constat, veritatum nexum in se consideratum esse rationem obiective spectatam: quatenus vero ille nexus ab homine perspicitur potest, ideoque inter facultates hominis numeratur, eatenus complectitur rationem subjective consideratam'. Later we find even the exact term *objective reason*, cf. idem, *Compendium Theologiae purioris* (Tübingen, Erhard: 1752) 524: 'objectivae rationis intuitus'.

reason as 'Verstand', i.e. the application of the principles of logic in order to gain insight into the nexus of truths, objective reason as 'Vernunft', i.e. the divine mind's unlimited insight into the nexus of all truths.<sup>62</sup>

Following the differentiation between subjective and objective reason, we are now able to examine the importance of the aforementioned self-knowledge for Wolff's concept of impartiality. Subjective reason conceived as human reasoning has an intrinsic inclination towards truth. Its ideal application would lead us straight to the truth, if we were not limited by our individual standpoints. Subjective reason participates in objective reason, which is its objective or aim, because proper reasoning leads us to invent single truths which necessarily belong to the realm of the transindividual system of truths. Due to this, self-knowledge does not only imply being aware of the limits of our understanding. It also implies that whatever we know with certainty is the result of a sort of moving away from our individual standpoint towards so-called objective reason or, in other words, towards 'impersonal' objectivity.<sup>63</sup> – At least, following

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<sup>62</sup> Reinbeck Johann Gustav, *Zweyter Theil Der Betrachtungen über die In der Augspurgischen Confeßion Erhaltene und damit verknüpfte Göttliche Wahrheiten Nebst einer Vorrede Von dem Gebrauch der Vernunft Und Welt=Weisheit in der Gottes=Gelahrtheit, heraus gegeben von Johann Gustav Reinbeck Königl. Preuß. Consistorial-Rath und Insepector zu Cölln an der Spree*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, Haude: 1742) XXIX (§ 22): 'Und so ist denn die Vernunft, wenn sie einem Menschen zugeschrieben, und also Subjective genommen wird, (\*) nichts anders, als eine richtige Anwendung des Verstandes, und eine Einsicht in die allgemeine und besondere, in der Welt enthaltene Wahrheiten, und derselben Zusammenhang'. The symbol (\*) points to the following annotation: 'Wir haben schon oben §. XI. bemercket, daß die Vernunft in einem zwiefachen Verstande genommen werden könne; einmahl in so fern sie die Wahrheiten, welche außer dem Menschen befindlich sind, und ihren Zusammenhang untereinander haben, ausdrucket; und denn auch in so fern sie als etwas in dem Menschen befindliches betrachtet wird. Dieser Unterscheid hat auch seine gute Richtigkeit. Denn es wird jedermann zugestehen müssen, daß wenn auch in der Welt kein Mensch gefunden werden sollte, dennoch in derselben Wahrheit, und eine Ubereinstimmung der Wahrheiten mit einander, folglich auch ein gewisser Zusammenhang derselben seyn würde. GOTT hat diesen Zusammenhang, in so fern derselbe möglich ist, von Ewigkeit her, auf das allervollkommensten eingesehen; und deßwegen ist auch in GOTT die höchste Vernunft. So viel nun der Mensch von diesem Zusammenhang auch einsieht, und so weit diese seine Einsicht mit denen in der Welt befindlichen Wahrheiten übereinkommt, in so fern ist der Mensch vernünftig. Und in so fern er diesem Zusammenhange der Wahrheiten in Worten und Wercken nachgeheth; in so fern handelt er vernunftmäßig'. See also *ibid.* XXII (§ 15): 'Und wenn denn auch der Verstand würcklich angewendet wird, also, daß bey einem Menschen ein würckliches Erkenntniß gefunden wird; der Mensch aber seinen Verstand nicht richtig, und wie es der Zusammenhang der Wahrheiten erfordert, anwendet; so kan man ihm in so fern keine Vernunft zugestehen. Denn, zu der Vernunft wird nicht nur der würckliche, sondern auch NB. der richtige Gebrauch des Verstandes erfordert. Wird der Verstand übel angewendet und gemißbrauchet, so ist solches keine Vernunft, sondern Unvernunft.'

<sup>63</sup> See the title of Rescher's book *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason*.

Wolff's epistemology, truth appears to be part of an absolutely impartial realm: the divine mind. Attributing to God the perfection of the hermeneutical principle of equity, the Wolffian Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten therefore concludes in his *Metaphysica*: 'Impartial justice is equity. Hence, God as the most just and the most impartial is most equitable'.<sup>64</sup>

It is easy to see from this résumé of Wolff's epistemology that impartiality involves positively valued human qualities, among which are the capacity for correct and attentive reasoning, hermeneutic equity, self-knowledge, and love of and quest for truth. Impartiality as conceived by Wolff also brings about a kind of rationalistic optimism which consists in the belief that by these virtues objectivity could at least be approached – if not *de facto* realized – and represented by a system of truths, even if one still in progress and thus discursive and constantly revised. Such a system of truths, as construed by humans, obviously calls for correspondence with objective reason, i. e. the real order of things and truths existing independently of human beings. This call for correspondence is considered possible because both our architectural system of truths and the real order of things follow the same rules: the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.

Yet, a bitter aftertaste remains, reminding us that our access to objectivity is restricted by our individual interests and by the condition of our intellectual capability. Could it be that even impartiality, the idea and ideal of impersonal rationality, can serve personal, selfish interests and be deployed as strategic argument for one's own ends?

### 3. *The Political Use of Impartiality, or Interested Impartiality*

The tactical or political use of impartiality and of its opposite, partiality, consists simply in using impartiality as a merely rhetorical argument within a specific debate. I have already mentioned Wolff's rhetorical appeal to the impartial world. What is striking is that Wolff in most cases uses the term impartiality when referring to the discussion and criticism of his philosophy by theologians, or later in the 1740s by Newtonians. This and Wolff's strong self-reference and his high self-esteem make his use

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<sup>64</sup> Baumgarten Alexander Gottlieb, *Metaphysica*, 3rd ed. (Halle, Hemmerde: 1750) 332–333 (§ 918): 'Impartialis iustitia est aequitas. Deus iustissimus, et impartialissimus, est aequissimus'. The first two editions of the *Metaphysica* were published in 1739 and 1742.

of impartiality somewhat suspicious. He not only explicitly emphasizes that he loves truth and peace, he also claims that it is his philosophy which provides the means for correct reasoning, proper hermeneutics, and hence for impartiality. In consequence, the reader of Wolff's writings, in particular of those writings from which I have quoted, gains the impression that Wolff is necessarily impartial, while, on the contrary, his opponents' impartiality is put in question.

Therefore, I interpret Wolff's appeal to the world of impartial persons as a kind of rhetorical grouping, on the one hand, Wolff includes himself and the reader in the world of impartial persons; on the other, Wolff's opponents are related to the group of partial persons, who share a reliance on authority and dogmatic prejudices, and lack the capacity to apply the hermeneutical and logical methods of philosophy and mathematics properly and thoroughly. This rhetorical appeal to the impartial world is a political strategy of intellectual immunisation against criticism. It is a political argument that supports the scientific credibility and predominance of the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy, while it strongly questions the scientific credibility of its opponents.

I want to conclude by giving a concrete example to illustrate Wolff's use of impartiality as a more or less political argument. In the preface to his annotated edition of Johann Franz Budde's criticism of his *German Metaphysics*, Wolff addresses the reader directly.<sup>65</sup> He maintains that he had written the *German Metaphysics more geometrico*. He adds that his work was approved by reasonable men who informed Wolff about their approbation by word of mouth or in written form.<sup>66</sup> Wolff then appeals to impartiality as follows: 'Die Sache redet vor sich selbst/wenn sie mit unpartheyischen Augen erwogen wird/und braucht keines Zeugnisses.'<sup>67</sup> Wolff thus argues that whoever is able to use his eyes properly must of necessity agree with him, without needing authoritative testimony which confirms the correctness of Wolff's arguments and doctrines; authority thus consists in the accuracy of the reader's eyes alone. accordingly, 'impartial eyes' apparently belong to an *intended* reader who, by Wolff's appeal to impartiality, must feel impelled to agree with Wolff's argumentation if

<sup>65</sup> The preface begins with the following address: 'Geneigter Leser!'.

<sup>66</sup> Wolff, *Bedencken*, "Vorrede" fol. 2<sup>r</sup>: 'Es hat auch meine Arbeit vieler verständiger Männer Beyfall gefunden/wie sie mich dessen theils schriftlich theils mündlich versichert/und noch bis diese Stunde versichern'.

<sup>67</sup> 'Provided it is seen or considered with impartial eyes, the matter [i.e. the argumentation and the doctrines in Wolff's *German Metaphysics*] is self-evident and does not require testimony': Wolff, *Bedencken*, "Vorrede" fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

he does not want to risk that his moral and rational integrity might be seriously challenged. By calling Budde a defamer ('Verläumder'),<sup>68</sup> by marking Budde's criticism of the *German Metaphysics* as a defamation based on perverse reading and interpretation ('verkehrte Auslegung'; 'Verdrehungen und Verkehrungen meiner Worte'),<sup>69</sup> by questioning Budde's philosophical competence,<sup>70</sup> and by judging Budde's argumentation as arbitrary and wrong, Wolff exerts even more pressure on the reader's eyes. In this way, he suggests to the reader that it might be better to be partial in favour of Wolff's position than to persist in one's own impartial or indifferent viewpoint located between two opposing opinions which still need to be considered and evaluated. In other words: by rhetorically appealing to impartiality, Wolff brings his philosophical or rational authority to bear in order to guide the reader's eyes towards partiality and interestedness. Wolff thus produces a seemingly paradoxical effect: due to his rhetorical use of the word *impartial* as an empty term, or a variable which serves as a vector implying an authoritative adjustment and definite directedness of the reader, impartiality becomes dependent on partiality – it becomes, indeed, interested impartiality.

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<sup>68</sup> Wolff, *Bedencken*, "Vorrede" fol. 5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Wolff, *Bedencken*, "Vorrede" fol. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> Wolff, *Bedencken* 1 (annotation a): 'Sie müssen seine Philosophische Schrifften nicht gelesen haben: denn sonst würde ihnen bekandt seyn/daß Herr Budde nichts weniger als die Philosophie versteht/und seine Schrifften nichts als den Namen von der Philosophie haben'.



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## 5. IMPARTIALITY AND THE HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP



IMPARTIALITY AND THE EARLY MODERN *ARS CRITICA*  
THE CASE OF JOHN SELDEN'S *HISTORIE OF TITHES* (1618)<sup>1</sup>

N.J.S. Hardy

This essay is concerned with a set of scholarly practices which were fundamental to late Renaissance and early Enlightenment education and thought. They went by the names of criticism, or the *ars critica*, philology, *literae humaniores*, and grammar. Common features include the fact that works of criticism were usually written in Latin for an erudite, pan-European, multi-confessional audience, sometimes referred to as the 'republic of letters'. They were identified as somehow distinct from theology, philosophy, narrative history, and civil or canon law, but they were often considered as subsidiaries to these genres, providing the collected and refined information about ancient texts on which they could build normative arguments and conclusions. Sometimes they were editions of and commentaries on specific works or authors, but sometimes they were synthetic treatises dealing with a particular question concerning a custom or doctrine from the ancient world. At other times they treated a range of disparate authors and texts at once, in what is sometimes known as the *variae lectiones* tradition – a genre of which Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) is a particularly significant and philosophically sophisticated example.<sup>2</sup> The narrowest definitions of the *ars critica* limited it to the editing and correction of ancient texts, usually from manuscript. But this was just the tip of the iceberg: to practice this kind of criticism required an ever more sophisticated understanding of ancient history and literature.<sup>3</sup>

What role did notions of partiality and impartiality play in criticism during this period? There is a substantial literature on the development of impartiality and ideas of objectivity within the history of science, but not

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger; the participants in the conference 'The Emergence of Impartiality', for their instructive responses to my initial paper; and Rhodri Lewis.

<sup>2</sup> On Bayle and impartiality, see Anne Eusterschulte's contribution in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview, see Bravo B., "Critique in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Rise of the Notion of Historical Criticism", in Ligota C. – Quantin J.-L. (eds.), *History of Scholarship* (Oxford: 2006) 135–195.

within the history of scholarship.<sup>4</sup> In fact, in the period covered by this chapter – roughly the first half of the seventeenth century – ‘impartiality’ was not a buzzword within philology. Nonetheless, philologists and their readers were exercised by the question of how they could escape partiality in their use of historical sources, in particular when the claims of criticism were perceived as clashing with those of theology. And so I intend to offer notes towards a prehistory of the appeal to impartiality as an ideal within the philological arts, starting with the most important debate about the status of criticism in seventeenth-century England. This was the debate over the scholar and lawyer John Selden’s *Historie of Tithes*, whose title page proclaimed its impartiality: ‘We are not moved by party prejudice, but have taken up arms against your counsels, deceitful Sloth.’<sup>5</sup>

Selden’s *Historie of Tithes* was published in 1618, having circulated beforehand in manuscript.<sup>6</sup> As well as causing Selden to be summoned before James I to explain himself, it generated three major responses in the years immediately following its publication: first, from the presbyterian courtier James Sempill; then the Church of England clergyman Richard Tillesley; then the philologist, ecclesiastical historian, and eventual Bishop of Norwich, Richard Montagu.<sup>7</sup> As Selden’s epigraph and the playful responses to it by his critics show, the accusation of partiality was paramount.

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<sup>4</sup> For the former, see above all Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007). For general surveys of recent work in the history of scholarship, see the editors’ introduction to Ligota – Quantin (eds.), *History of Scholarship*; Güthenke C., “Shop Talk. Reception studies and recent work in the history of scholarship”, *Classical Receptions Journal* 1 (2009) 104–115; and Levitin D., “From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism and Christianity in European historiography from Reformation to ‘Enlightenment’”, *Historical Journal* 55/4 (2012) 1117–1160. I would like to thank Dr Levitin for allowing me to read this review article in advance.

<sup>5</sup> Selden John, *The Historie of Tithes* (London, s.n.: 1618). Subsequent references will be supplied parenthetically in the text. The original reads: ‘Nec partis studiis agimur. Sed sumsimus arma/ Consiliis inimica tuis, IGNAVIA fallax!’. I quote the translation in Toomer G.J., *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship* (Oxford: 2009) 265. See also the title page of one of the hostile responses, Sempill James, *Sacrilege Sacredly Handled* (London, William Jones for Edmund Weaver: 1619): ‘Nec partis studiis agimur, sed sumpsimus arma / Sacrilegis inimica viris’. Cf. Lucan, *Bellum Civile* IV, 348–349.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the work’s contents, composition, and publication, see Toomer G.J., “Selden’s ‘Historie of Tithes’: Genesis, Publication, Aftermath”, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, 3/4 (2002) 345–378.

<sup>7</sup> Sempill, *Sacrilege Sacredly Handled*, Appendix; Tillesley Richard, *Animaduersiones upon M. Seldens History of Tithes* (London, John Bill: 1619); Montagu Richard, *Diatribae upon the First Part of the Late History of Tithes* (London, Felix Kyngston for Matthew Lownes: 1621). All subsequent references to these works are given in parentheses in the main text.

As far as the content of Selden's treatise was concerned, Selden had begun, in the first chapter, with instances of possible payments of tithes in the Old Testament before God gave the Law to Moses and the Jews; the second, with tithes under the Law, both as they were actually paid and as they were 'thought due' (sig. d3'); the third, with tithing under the gentiles. The subject of the second chapter underpinned other commentators' typological arguments in favour of tithing *iure divino*: they claimed that the tithing practices prescribed by God for the Jews had been preserved, not abrogated, for the Christian Church from the apostles onwards. The subject of the third chapter, pagan tithing, underpinned their natural law arguments: if the gentiles, who had no access to God's revelation, nonetheless paid tithes, it demonstrated that tithing was prescribed not just by divine or human positive law, but by the law of nature also. The subject of the first chapter underpinned both kinds of argument: on the one hand, if tithes were paid by the Old Testament Patriarchs before the Law had explicitly required any tithing, then natural law must have led them to do so. On the other, Melchizedek, regarded as the first recipient of tithes in the Old Testament, was commonly interpreted as a type of Christ.

After these opening three chapters, Selden proceeds with tithing in the fashion of an ecclesiastical history, starting with the apostolic era of Christianity and moving forward to the present day, roughly in blocks of four hundred years. The overwhelming focus of the responses to his work, however, was on the first three chapters, partly because arguments for tithing at the time had come to depend not on the ecclesiastical or civil laws of England, but on divine law adduced from Scripture and natural law adduced from both Scripture and pagan texts.<sup>8</sup>

### *Historical Narration Versus Dogmatic Contention*

We can begin with the very first reference to tithing dealt with by Selden: that of Genesis 14.20, in which Abraham gives to Melchizedek, 'the priest of the most high God', 'tithes of all'. What the cryptic phrase 'tithes of all' referred to was difficult to determine: the options ranged between a tenth of all the spoils from the battle Abraham had just fought, to a tenth

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<sup>8</sup> Christianson P., *Discourse on History, Law, and Governance in the Public Career of John Selden, 1610–1635* (Toronto: 1996) 64–68 offers a survey of treatises regarding tithing, and the best account of the progress (and relative originality) of the *iure divino* argument for tithes up to this point.

of all 'increase' or revenue from the harvest as well. Selden favoured the former, quoting several later glosses on the passage. One of the most telling for him was that of Josephus, 'a Iew', who had 'confidently written the Tithe there giuen to be δεκάτην τῆς λείας, the *Tithe of what was gotten by the Warre*. He knew a receiued opinion in his Nation, to be so, or else had not been so forward to deliuer it' (2). Richard Montagu engaged closely with Josephus's testimony, and the extent of his 'forwardness' in giving it. Josephus, he pointed out, does not assert directly that Genesis 14.20 refers only to the spoils of war:

Iosephus hath this and no more. δεκάτην τῆς λείας Αβράμου διδόντος προσδέχε τὰς αὐτῶ [sic] τὴν δόσιν.<sup>9</sup> Abraham giuing him Tithe of the spoyles, hee receiueh that his gift. Heere is neither All, nor Onely, nor confidence, nor contestation; but a simple, naked, bare historicall recitall of things done (156–157).

Montagu's complaint was that Selden had made an unreasonable, over-reaching inference from Josephus. Selden was treating Josephus's statement as though it were an emphatic assertion forming part of an explicit position in a debate about tithes; in fact, it was much less than that. Montagu's standards in terms of admissible evidence were high: he was essentially asking that Selden find an ancient source that expressly put forward exactly the same interpretation as Selden himself. Anything less required a speculative leap on Selden's part, from 'affirmation' to 'contestation': 'It is a new poynt of learning you insist vpon, Euery affirmation of any thing, is a contestation against all other things [...] A dangerous piece of doctrine in these high-spirited times' (157). Montagu wanted Selden's sources to do all the arguing about tithes themselves, with the historian's task reduced to gathering and arranging those arguments. Truth was something to be accumulated, not produced. This amassing of proof texts was a much safer way of proceeding for Montagu. It bypassed the 'dangerous' process of having to proceed from facts to a more abstract historical synthesis, using inference and personal judgement along the way.

Montagu had missed one of the subtleties of Selden's argument. The reason why Josephus had only needed to 'recite' his interpretation of Genesis 14.20 was that it had, by that time, become 'a receiued opinion in his Nation'. The simplicity of Josephus's statement allowed the modern

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<sup>9</sup> Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* I, 181. The modern text in Niese B. (ed.), *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, 7 vols. (Berlin: 1885–1895) reads 'Αβράμου δὲ διδόντος καὶ τὴν δεκάτην τῆς λείας αὐτῷ προσδέχεται τὴν δόσιν' (here vol. I).



historian not so much to rely on the testimony of Josephus alone as to infer that an exegetical consensus, or custom, prevailed among the Jews as a whole. Selden's insight lay in his double use of Josephus: on one level, he took Josephus's proposition about tithes at face value, as an affirmation of the true meaning of Genesis 14.20. On another level, however, he was arguing from silence, gleaning from Josephus something which his source was not necessarily trying to give its readers.

Montagu repeated the same basic point elsewhere, and in the conclusion of this section, he brought the full weight of patristic tradition and translation to bear: 'can you name me one man amongst the Fathers or last Interpreters, that saith *Only spoyles*? [...] If not, you are a Noueller, Master *Selden*, and tread in Pathes that are *Nullius ante, Trita solo*, and therefore best looke vnto your Feete that you goe surely' (180).

Other remarks show that the whole force of Montagu's rebuttal came from the methods and habits of scholastic disputation: 'It is a fault in Schooles, whatsoeuer it is in Mootes, to haue more in the Conclusion then the premises afford'. Montagu was relying on the stability and integrity of the traditional academic hierarchy, whereas Selden, a 'Noueller', was using a nebulous notion of philology, and hence of history, to infiltrate other disciplines. Selden had wandered outside the bounds of historical narration and into those of dogmatic assertion.

We have come to a point where we may feel that Montagu had failed to appreciate the complexities of Selden's use of his sources and that, as Jean-Louis Quantin has put it in a different context, 'historical scholarship had no need of syllogisms to make very persuasive points'.<sup>10</sup> Montagu, according to this view, espoused a commitment to philology but was still clinging to a highly conservative, sterile culture of academic argumentation, relying on the rules of Aristotelian dialectic: as he warned Selden, 'you left *Logick* too soone at Vniuersity, to haunt *Philologie* at Innes of Court' (49). A further development of this view would add that Selden's book, as Montagu's reference to Selden's legal training in London at the Inns of Court implied, exhibited a fusion of humanism with cutting-edge legal history. Indeed, modern scholars have often selected this feature of the *Historie* for special praise.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Quantin J.-L., *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: 2009) 314.

<sup>11</sup> On sixteenth-century French legal humanism, see Kelley D., *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York: 1970). For its influence on Selden, see Christianson, *Discourse* 69–70, and Woolf D., *The*

However, such a view would miss quite how radical Selden's approach was for its time, even in relation to other examples of humanist historical writing: especially when humanists engaged with sacred and ecclesiastical, rather than legal history. Montagu's rigorous distinction between 'recitall' or 'affirmation' and 'contestation' was a commonplace of even the most cutting edge patristic scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

This is best illustrated by the case of Isaac Casaubon, who spent the last years of his life composing a meticulous refutation of Cardinal Cesare Baronio's landmark history of the Church, the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (the first volume of which was published in 1588).<sup>13</sup> Casaubon required of Baronius that the sources he cited be not simply impartial, but rather partial on Baronius's side. In his treatment of the use of Latin in the early Church, Casaubon started by making the kind of subtle inference and appeal to received, unwritten custom rather than formal precept that characterized Selden's work.<sup>14</sup> Baronius, as Casaubon presented it, had argued that the use of Latin in official documents and at Church Councils showed that Latin had been established, in a prescriptive fashion, as the primary language of the Church. Greek speakers used Latin merely in order to gain curial advancement: Chrysostom told the story of a young man who had flourished at an episcopal court because he had received a solid education in Latin. As we have seen in Selden's use of Josephus, Casaubon was extracting a fact from Chrysostom which was not the principal object of Chrysostom's discourse. Chrysostom was not stating that 'Greek-speakers do not use Latin because it is the officially prescribed language of the Church, but because it is useful from a professional point of view to do so'. He was simply recording evidence which, with a little inference on the part of the reader, contributed to that conclusion. The use of Latin, furthermore, was purely a matter of custom: 'it must be known

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*Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the 'Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: 1990) 218, 233–234. For scholarship on legal training in early seventeenth-century London, see Archer J.E. – Goldring E. – Knight S. (eds.), *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester: 2011).

<sup>12</sup> For more on this and related distinctions, see Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity* 64–68; and Montagu, *Diatribae* 267–268 for Montagu's fullest formulation of them.

<sup>13</sup> Casaubon's published response did not advance very far beyond the life of Christ, however: see *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI* (London, John Norton for John Bill: 1614).

<sup>14</sup> Casaubon, *Exercitationes* 225–226.

that no law, no canon, existed which ordered it to be done in this way; it became a received idea solely by custom'.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, however, Casaubon retreated from inferential arguments and resorted to one that would have satisfied Montagu. He adduced sources showing that, whereas the use of Latin in papal documents was simply a matter of custom, 'it was not a mere custom for the delegates of the Pope to translate [his letters] from Latin into Greek, but a matter of law and necessity'.<sup>16</sup> He still, like Montagu, felt a need to cite a passage in a source which stated, almost verbatim, his own position. He was much less strident than Selden about the fundamental importance to the historian of unwritten custom in itself, independent from any other form of evidence. The gradations of historicism we can observe between these three authors belie the complacent notion that humanist scholarship was homogeneous in its use of historical methods, and remained so throughout the seventeenth century; or that humanism, at least in its most sophisticated, philologically astute manifestations, had managed to sever itself from scholasticism.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not Montagu was right about the facts, his more general objection to Selden made sense. From the patristic scholar's point of view, Selden had taken historical statements in his sources as statements of dogma; and in turn, he himself had offered a history which pretended, Montagu thought, to have the force of dogma. Montagu had gestured at, without quite being able to articulate, an understanding of history as a genre which would prove crucial in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Philology, unlike dialectical disputation and theological polemic, was not, as Selden had deployed it, an intrinsically contentious mode of writing. It gave the appearance of impartial affirmation rather than argumentative contestation. For him, however, this impartiality was a disadvantage, especially if someone like Selden tried to use history to lead his readers to highly contentious conclusions. But it would become

<sup>15</sup> 'sciendum, nullam legem extitisse, nullum canonem, qui iuberet ita fieri: sola consuetudine id receptum est'.

<sup>16</sup> 'ut Latina verterentur a Papae Legatis in Graecum, non mos; sed ius et necessitas fuit'.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Joseph Levine's assertion that 'the problems and techniques of the new historiography [...] changed hardly at all for two or three centuries', in Levine J.M., *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca: 1987) 155. Similarly, David Berkowitz asserts that 'with Selden's History [sic] of Tithes, humanist historiography reaped where Lorenzo Valla had sown': see Berkowitz D., *John Selden's Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington, D.C.: 1988) 35.

a great advantage in an era which conceived itself as more 'polite' and 'civil' than the preceding age of religious enthusiasm, doctrinal strife, and civil and inter-confessional bloodshed: 'high-spirited times', to borrow Montagu's own phrase.<sup>18</sup> The early eighteenth century saw a shift in the valency of the term 'criticism', in particular: towards denoting impartial inquiry into any subject, rather than a set of practices for reading texts.<sup>19</sup> In his own time, however, when humanist philology and textual criticism still jostled with scholastic disputation, Selden's claims to what we might anachronistically call 'impartiality' in the demanding arena of academic theology and scriptural exegesis seemed incongruous and inadequate.

### *Particularism and Emendation*

I would now like to cover a slightly different way in which accusations of partiality featured in the debate. This is in Selden's use of criticism to undermine arguments based on natural law on the one hand, and typology on the other. In both instances, Selden was trying to limit these arguments by making the sources on which they rested mean less than his opponents thought they did. One of the most significant interventions by what Montagu called Selden's 'Criticke faculty' came in the third chapter of the *Historie*, when Selden discussed a crux that underpinned natural law arguments for tithing. It was a passage from a Latin lexicographer and grammarian, Festus, which appeared to declare that the consecration of tithes to deities was a common custom across the ancient world; Selden, however, contended that this was a simplification of Festus' original statement by Paul the Deacon, the eighth-century monk who had abridged his work. In this respect, Selden was following Scaliger, but even Scaliger failed to appreciate how badly Festus had been misrepresented:

that assertion vsed by many out of Festus: *Decima quaeque veteres Dijs suis offerebant* [the ancients used to offer all of their tithes to their gods]. no such matter. some did, and only somtimes, and of some things, and most vsually to some gods only [...] No doubt is, but that which *Festus* had there in some larger note obserued, according to a truth agreeing with

<sup>18</sup> The work of J.G.A. Pocock on Gibbon and Enlightenment historiography frequently demonstrates this point, but see, in particular, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume One: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon* (Cambridge: 1999) 63–64.

<sup>19</sup> This is one of the senses it had, for example, in Cooper Anthony Ashley, *Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times* (London, John Darby: 1711).

what is before opend, was too boldly contracted into that piece of vntruth, by his Epitomator *Paulus Diaconus* [...] and *Paulus* is well taxed for it by the diuine *Scaliger* [...]. But when *Scaliger* there added; *Vni enim tantum Herculi hoc fiebat* [for this happened only for one god, Hercules]; he mends it not enough. for if it had been *Decima quaeque Herculi veteres offerebant* [the ancients used to offer all of their tithes to Hercules], it had been false, if vnderstood as of Tithes vsed to be giuen by all or of all things. they consisted painly [sic] in vows and speciall thanksgiuing, which were wholly arbitrarie (28–29).

Selden's philological particularism could not stomach the use of pagan sources to support natural law arguments for tithing; hence his insistence that Festus's original reference to ancient tithing practices was much more restricted (to Hercules alone, and occasionally rather than customarily) than Paul the Deacon's generalizing redaction would have it. For Selden, the task of philology was to provide greater precision, bringing glosses and parallels to bear in order to make the singularity of each example apparent. His opponents, by contrast, treated individual and occasional acts of consecration of tithes in a variety of different contexts as witnesses to a deeper, binding, and generally observed law that governed tithing as a whole, from the Old Testament Patriarchs to the late Roman Republic.

An equally important issue, as the above quotation shows, was the emendation of texts which ignorant and barbarous medieval scholars and scribes had corrupted. Selden, following Joseph Scaliger, proposed correcting Festus in order to align his statement about gentile tithing in the ancient world with the numerous examples of it which Selden had just cited.<sup>20</sup> But the habit of correcting in this way, although hardly arbitrary, could end up looking like an exercise of overweening authority and contempt for the learning of past ages. Montagu satirised Scaliger's 'coniec- tures and opinions, [which] with himselfe, and with many that magnifie him beyond degree of modestie, are κύρια δόξαι, as the Lawes and Statutes of the Medes and Persians' (411); but it was 'lawfull for any Free-man in

<sup>20</sup> Scaliger's brief, posthumously published *Diatriba de decimis in Lege Dei* was important for the second chapter in particular: in Scaliger Joseph, *Opuscula varia antehac non edita* (Frankfurt, Jacobus Fischerus: 1612) 53–66. Selden's copy is listed in a catalogue of his books made after his death: Bodleian Library, MS Selden supra 111, fol. 47<sup>r</sup>. For his discussion of this crux, however, Selden was using Scaliger's notes on Festus: see Festus, *De verborum significatione* (Geneva, Petrus Santandreas: 1575) 47 for the passage, and Scaliger's "Castigationes" at 52.

Learning, to haue neglected his correction' (411–412) if he considered it unfounded.<sup>21</sup>

In the end, imputing textual corruption to an epitomiser like Paul the Deacon could simply serve as a backdoor to any number of wilful emendations by a modern critic. Surely, Selden's opponents asked, an author might sometimes only need to be explained, not corrected or censured: the true ignoramus was the modern interpreter who rushed to condemn rather than understand. Selden himself often struggled to decide between explication and condemnation. He made careful allowance for two possibilities: either authors could be explicated, so that they were shown to have meant what he wanted them to mean based on the rest of his evidence, or they had indeed intended to say something which Selden had already concluded was wrong. If the latter, 'they deceiue much and are deceuid' (32).

Underlying these specific disagreements was a more profound difference between the two sides. Philology, Montagu argued, had flourished in antiquity as well as during this modern revival of learning; and its practitioners were closer to the objects they studied, and often less likely to make mistakes. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for instance, was 'a man as intelligent in Pagan rites as any: as skilfull in the Romane Histories, Religion, Pontificals, and Ceremonies, as any: as painfull, iudicious, and worthy Historian, as euer dealt with the affaires of that state. And lastly, the acutest Criticke of his time, and best Philologer, one of them, then liuing' (457–458). Once again, Casaubon fell on Montagu's side of the argument, with the younger scholar merely echoing his judgement of Dionysius.<sup>22</sup> Selden, conversely,

thought himselfe to be the onely man with the great shadow, vnto whom wee poore ignorants in Philology, ought to rise vp, and rely vpon [...] that dareth oppose his yea, vnto all their nay's: They Philologers, and the best of Philologers, & his Masters in Philologie [...]. They know, and had meanes to know that, which you cannot possibly know: and whatsoeuer you know in Grecian Antiquities, you haue it from them, or such as They (520–521).

<sup>21</sup> For more on Scaliger's liberal use of conjectural emendation, see Grafton A., *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1983–1993) vol. I, *passim*; and for Selden's emulation of Scaliger in this area, see Toomer, *John Selden* 820; and, for examples, *ibidem* 214, 226, 370, 379, 472, 477, 514.

<sup>22</sup> Casaubon's preface to his edition of Polybius ([...] *historiarum libri qui supersunt* [Paris, Hieronymus Drouardus: 1609]) described Dionysius as a 'very erudite critic' ('admodum erudito Critico'), fol. a5<sup>v</sup>.

The fact that Selden and Scaliger did not quite agree in their proposed emendations, moreover, was a genuine problem, since it threatened to relativize the endeavour of textual criticism altogether: as Tillesley put it, 'the Criticks not agreeing, were it not best to trust *Paulus Diaconus* his honestie in relating learned *Festus* Sense, who saw what they coniectured at?' (32–33). The epistemology of *emendatio* was an important factor: how could the critic ever know for sure that he had not simply misunderstood the text he was correcting?

We can already sense a fragmentation between ancients and moderns within humanist philology in this, the earliest major debate about philology as a discipline in the vernacular, non-scholarly sphere. Selden nodded eagerly in his preface towards the various modern cultures of antiquarianism and philology which had informed his own work, from Roger Bacon, a light in the darkness of late medieval clerical ineptitude, to Erasmus or the advocates of the *mos Gallicus*.<sup>23</sup> But he was surprisingly silent about the ancient precursors to his own endeavours. This provided Montagu with enough ammunition to target both Scaliger and Selden as 'nouellers' and depict himself as a champion of antiquity. Selden and Scaliger were autocrats and innovators in learning who imagined an absolute and permanent rupture between themselves and the figures they studied; Montagu preferred a model of primitive perfection followed by incremental decay, with reformation nonetheless always possible. In this respect at least, he made himself appear more historically minded than Selden: in a limited sense, he was historicizing historical learning itself.

We can also see how devastatingly easy it was for Montagu to represent Selden as 'partial' in this case: the very nature of conjectural emendation invited such accusations, whereas sticking to the manuscript evidence did not. So did any claim that historical facts unknown to the ancients were only now being uncovered by the philologist. Finally, any critic who came down on the side of particularity, of limiting the range of meanings a word or passage could have, could straightforwardly be labelled as partial.

We can see this third process at work in another form of *iure divino* argument for tithes, whose relationship to philology functioned in a slightly different way: the argument from typology. Although I am dealing with this last, it was perhaps the most important of all, as it relied solely on Scripture, and brought together the Old and New Testaments,

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<sup>23</sup> On the French school of legal history commonly labelled with the term *mos Gallicus*, see above all Kelley, *Foundations*.



demonstrating the necessity of tithing in a Christian commonwealth as well as under natural law or the Mosaic Law.<sup>24</sup> Crucially, it rested not on the text and particular verbal features of the Bible, but on the historical facts to which it was thought to refer.<sup>25</sup> For Sempill, a history, even one of genuine, recorded events, could not be a 'true history' if it ignored the typological dimension: 'I must craue pardon, in following his *History* [...] to diue a little deeper in the true Mystery and End of things: lest the common and carelesse Reader (by the naked name of *History*) might conceiue there were no more in it, but *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*' (34).

The most important typological relationship was, of course, between Christ and Melchizedek, 'the priest of the most high God', as the antiquary Henry Spelman had noted, following the correspondence between the two pointed out by the author of Hebrews 7.<sup>26</sup> But Selden treated Hebrews 7 the same way he treated Josephus, as a piece of linguistic commentary on Genesis 14, without reference to typology, and this was one of the most striking features of the entire *Historie*, as Thomas Barlow and Thomas Stanley both noted.<sup>27</sup> Sempill described his typological approach in a way that presented it as the polar opposite of Selden's critical particularism:

All Types, and of all, chiefly this, must haue euer the largest extent of sense that Nature or Analogie can afford them. They be fundamentall things, and so, must beare all that can be truely built vpon them. This Meeting then betweene *Melchisedec* and *Abraham* [...] must be extended, to whatsoever might be afterwards intended, both for *Blessing* and *Tything* proper to all Priesthood κατὰ τάξιν [as an order], Law, and Gospell: all Times, all Persons, all Things, for all Ends, as at length before (37).

<sup>24</sup> On typology in early modern theology, see Miller J.A., "Theological Typology, Milton, and the Aftermath of Writing", unpublished University of Oxford DPhil thesis (2011). A remarkably small amount of attention has been paid to interactions between typology and humanist biblical scholarship, but see Shuger D.K., *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: 1994) 23–24, 50, 83, 224. To put these issues in broader perspective, see Frei H., *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: 1974); and Auerbach E., "Figura", in idem, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: six essays* (New York: 1959). For an example of Isaac Casaubon's appeals to typology, see his *Exercitationes* 72.

<sup>25</sup> A point made with unprecedented emphasis by Miller, "Theological Typology" 99–110.

<sup>26</sup> Spelman Henry, *De non temerandis ecclesiis* (London, John Beale: 1613) 73.

<sup>27</sup> For Barlow, see Bodleian Library, MS Barlow 54, fol. 53<sup>r</sup>, which alleges that Selden 'cutteth the sinews of y<sup>e</sup> Ap[ost]les argument'. I owe this reference to Jeffrey Miller. For Stanley, see his unpublished treatise on Hebrews 7, "Ἀποθνήσκει. Exercitatio philologica de primitiis ac decimis praedae ad versum IV capitis VII Epistolae ad Hebraeos", Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.III.16, fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (directly following a refutation of Selden): 'quis [...] argumentum Apostoli de sacerdotio Christi elusum ire potuisset?'



Sempill's defense of typology here was similar to Montagu's of natural law. Both resisted Selden's inclination to limit a word or phrase's range of reference, to prevent general and normative conclusions being drawn from it.

Selden would doubtless have said that his tacit rejection of typology and philological exclusivism were mechanisms for avoiding partiality: resorting to natural law or typological conclusions forced readers to extract too much from their sources and twist them for their own ends. But Selden's opponents could easily have said the opposite: that wilfully ignoring natural law and typology was a highly partial, one-sided manoeuvre. They saw no reason why they couldn't simply add another layer of interpretation on top of the philological one which he had provided. While to modern readers Selden's *Historie* is a monument to the power of historical method, to his immediate audience the edifice seemed only half-finished. Grammatical, philological, and critical foundations needed theological demonstrations to be built on top. As Tillesley put it, it contained 'more *strange reading*, then *stronge reasoning*; more *quotations*, then *proofes*; more *will* (God be thanked) then *power*; good to *vse*, but dangerous to *beleuee*' (236).

In the context of English philology and historical writing, then, the kind of impartiality purportedly offered by Selden's treatise was stillborn. It did not belong in the still-dominant academic culture of theological disputation, written or oral. Nor was it in a position to replace the prevailing forms of scriptural exegesis, such as natural law and typology. If it belonged anywhere, it was in the loose network of intellectuals that has become known as the European republic of letters, perhaps the only sphere in which philology was regarded as valuable in its own right without always being subjected to the more rigorous jurisdiction of academic theology.<sup>28</sup> In fact, it is hard to imagine a debate like this one taking place in Latin and between two or more scholars from different countries living under different laws and different ecclesiastical systems. It may have been the transfer of a mode of historiography more suited to this republic of letters into a vernacular print setting, combined with Selden's attack

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<sup>28</sup> See Waquet F., "Qu'est-ce que la République des Lettres? Essai de sémantique historique", *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 147 (1989) 473–502. See also Fumaroli M., "The Republic of Letters", *Diogenes* 36 (1988) 129–152; the introduction to Jaumann H. (ed.), *Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus* (Wiesbaden: 2001); and Miller P., *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: 2000).

on clerical erudition, that generated the tensions I have described. This is supported by remarks Montagu made in private, recording his respect for Selden, 'saving the Churches quarrel, into which I would he had never entred'.<sup>29</sup>

But the controversy over the partiality of the *Historie of Tithes* did not just bring philology into conflict with theology. It also brought philology into conflict with itself, raising serious epistemological problems. One problem was that the critic could not ultimately know whether his correction was correct. Secondly, criticism wasn't an inherently motivated form of intellectual activity. The purpose of moral or political philosophy was clear enough, as was that of theology. But what was criticism for? It had no subject matter of its own: any text in any genre was up for grabs. If it wasn't explicitly being used to advance a partial and normative conclusion, why was it there? Finally, it was far from a widely accepted conclusion that philology and history demanded a fundamentally different way of approaching texts from natural law or typology. These were points of contention among humanists themselves, not just between humanists and theologians.

If there was a central problem with Selden's criticism, it was that it was fundamentally destructive rather than constructive. The impartiality which Selden was trying to offer was very limited in its applications. He tried to demolish natural law and typology, but placed nothing else on top of the basic layer of atomized historical facts which his criticism had left standing. He did not advance a theory of historical evolution or causality that linked his bare facts together, arriving at the union of narrative, rhetorical history, and humanist critical erudition which Arnaldo Momigliano justifiably said was first achieved by Edward Gibbon more than a century later.<sup>30</sup> For now, the role of criticism in developing a discourse of historiographical impartiality was far from established.

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<sup>29</sup> See his undated letter to Robert Cotton, in British Library, MS Cotton Julius C. III, fol. 276<sup>r</sup>. I have quoted from the copy in Bodleian Library, MS Smith 71, p. 107. Cf. Montagu's letter to John Cosin, 29 May 1626, in Ormsby G. (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, 2 vols. (Durham, 1869–1872), vol. I, 92–93.

<sup>30</sup> Momigliano A., "Ancient History and the Antiquarian", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, 3/4 (1950) 285–315, especially 311.

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PIERRE BAYLE'S *DICTIONNAIRE HISTORIQUE ET CRITIQUE*:  
HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND IMPARTIALITY OF JUDGEMENT

Anne Eusterschulte

Soyez impartial. (Voltaire)

Das gehaltvollste, einflussreichste, und für den philosophischen Geistesgang des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts wichtigste aller Werke der französischen Flüchtlinge, ja der bisherigen französischen Litteratur überhaupt, war Bayle's kritisches Wörterbuch. [...] Kein unpartheyischer Leser konnte das Baylesche Werk aus der Hand legen, ohne Naturalist in der Theologie, ohne Zweifler in der Philosophie zu werden: kein andres fand daher auch so viele Gegner von der einen, so viele Vertheidiger von der andern Seite; kein andres regte den erwachenden Denkgeist kräftiger an, als dieses: es ward übersetzt, gelesen, angegriffen und vertheidigt, in allen Sprachen Europas. (Daniel Jenisch)<sup>1</sup>

Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) was one of the most famous and at the same time controversial scholars in the Republic of Letters in the late seventeenth century. From Pierre Jurieu – his former friend and principal supporter, later one of his strongest adversaries – to Voltaire and the French encyclopaedists, or the German exponents of the early Enlightenment like Thomasius, as well as Leibniz and Gottsched, who published the first German translation of Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary*:<sup>2</sup> there has been a wide range of interpretations and evaluations of Bayle's critical works. In the early eighteenth century his main work was published and translated

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<sup>1</sup> Jenisch Daniel, *Geist und Charakter des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, Königlich-Preußische Akademische Kunst- und Buchhandlung: 1800) vol. I, part 2, 255 f.; see Rüesch M., "Pierre Bayle: Several Lives but just one Death. Structure, Arrangements and Rhetorics in Lexicography", in Michel P. – Herren M. – Rüesch M. (eds.), *Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft. Akten des internationalen Kongresses über Wissenstransfer und enzyklopädische Ordnungssysteme, Prangins, 2003* (Aachen: 2007) 413.

<sup>2</sup> Bayle Pierre, *Historisches und Critisches Wörterbuch*, trans. Johann Christoph Gottsched (Leipzig, Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf: 1744) (Reprint Hildesheim – New York – Zurich: 1997). The full title of Gottsched's edition read *Herrn Peter Baylens, weiland Professors der Philosophie und Historie zu Rotterdam, Historisches und Kritisches Wörterbuch, nach der neuesten Auflage von 1740 ins Deutsche übersetzt; Mit des berühmten Freyherrn von Leibnitz, und Herrn Maturin Veissiere la Croze, auch verschiedenen andern Anmerkungen, sonderlich bey anstößigen Stellen wie auch einigen Zugaben versehen, von Johann Christoph Gottscheden.*

in several revised editions, appended with comments, critical reviews, and refutations of contemporary scholars, completed with addenda and rectifying statements, emended with supplementary annotations and extended by corrections. In the European context Bayle's comprehensive work set off a controversy within the learned world which has continued to the present day.

Bayle's method of literary criticism was considered an exemplary masterpiece that represented the skills of editors, journalists, and scholars to produce striking works of lasting effect. His dictionary gained recognition because, as Voltaire emphasised, it embodied the principle of non-partisan critique: 'Soyez impartial.' According to Voltaire's *Conseils à un journaliste* (1737), Bayle was the true founder of a new era of literary criticism:

Vous me demandez comment il faut s'y prendre pour qu'un tel journal plaise à notre siècle et à la postérité. Je vous répondrai en deux mots: *Soyez impartial*. Vous avez la science et le goût; si avec cela vous êtes juste, je vous prédis un succès durable. Notre nation aime tous les genres de littérature, depuis les mathématiques jusqu'à l'épigramme [...]. Surtout en exposant des opinions, en les appuyant, en les combattant, évitez les paroles injurieuses qui irritent un auteur, et souvent toute une nation, sans éclairer personne. Point d'animosité, point d'ironie. Que diriez-vous d'un avocat-général qui, en résumant tout un procès, outragerait par des mots piquants la partie qu'il condamne? [...] Si Bayle, qui savait beaucoup, a beaucoup douté, songez qu'il n'a jamais douté de la nécessité d'être honnête homme. Soyez-le donc avec lui [...].<sup>3</sup>

More moderately, Christian Thomasius, the founder of the first German-language learned journal, entitled *Monatsgespräche* (1688), also appreciated his French precursor Bayle. Even though he published anonymously, Bayle was well known as the editorial journalist of the *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*. Another contemporary vote, that of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, defended Bayle against the vehement polemics and crossfire of attacks he was exposed to with the following characterisation:

Whatever he might be in speculation, he was in practice one of the best of Christians, and almost the only man I ever knew who, professing philosophy, lived truly as a philosopher; with that innocence, virtue, temperance,

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<sup>3</sup> Voltaire, "Conseils à un journaliste", in idem, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: 1890) vol. 23, 158–176, here 158–160. With regard to Voltaire's encomium on Bayle see Bost H. – Robert P. de (eds.), *Pierre Bayle citoyen du monde: de l'enfant du Carla à l'auteur du Dictionnaire. Actes du colloque du Carla-Bayle (13–15 septembre 1996)* (Paris: 1999) 118–119.

humility, contempt of the world and interest which might be called exemplary. Nor was there ever a fairer reasoner, or a civiler, politer, wittier man in conversation.<sup>4</sup>

But Bayle's honesty, attested to by Voltaire or Shaftesbury,<sup>5</sup> and the respectability of his critical project was a cause for disapproval and rigorous refutation. He was condemned as an atheist and was attacked for his animadversion to religious dogmatism and bigotry. Not only his outspoken criticism of religious convictions and orthodox doctrines (based on conflicting traditions concerning authoritative biblical exegesis and the need for oppositional parties to believe themselves to be in the sole possession of the truth), but also his advocacy of tolerance and his emphasis on the importance of a plurality of texts nourished the accusation of atheism. Bayle went so far as to defend the moral constancy of heretics or even irreligious persons.

From another point of view he was also seen as a steadfast fideist who believed strongly and imperturbably in the revelation of the true Christian God. How can this perspective be reconciled with the view that Bayle was a sceptical thinker and destroyer of doctrines, though nevertheless a 'Calvinist in belief'?<sup>6</sup> Or should we categorise him as a representative of sceptical critique in the footsteps of ancient Pyrrhonism, or even as a philosopher of super-scepticism, fighting against everything that is said and everything that is done?<sup>7</sup> Bayle's method of critique, based on scepticism going back to the ancient philosophers, could also be seen as a means of

<sup>4</sup> Cooper Anthony Ashley, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, "Letter to Mr. Darby (2 February 1708)", in Rand B., *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury* (London: 1900) 385–386; see Popkin R.H., *The History of Scepticism. From Savonarola to Bayle*, revised and expanded edition (Oxford – New York: 2003) 295–296.

<sup>5</sup> The qualities of an *honnête homme* that were attributed to Bayle by his advocates played an important role in Bayle's revision of moral principles. In the seventeenth century the concept of *honnêteté* designated the virtuous, well-educated, cosmopolitan man of wit. Later, *honnêteté* fell into disrepute and came to be associated with forms of courtly gallantry. Descartes reinterprets the *honnête homme* as a philosopher who is not interested in comprehensive philological or literary studies. Descartes René, "La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle", in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Ch. Adam and P. Tannery (Paris: 1897–1910) X.495; quoted in Mittelstrass J., *Neuzeit und Aufklärung* (Berlin: 1970) 97 and Jaumann H., "Frühe Aufklärung als historische Kritik. Pierre Bayle und Christian Thomasius", in Neumeister S. (ed.), *Frühaufklärung* (Munich: 1994) 149–170, here 170.

<sup>6</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 297.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem 283.

restraining the influence of rationalism in order to confirm the primacy of his fideism.<sup>8</sup>

In contemporary intellectual debates, the role Bayle played in the preparation of the European formation of the Enlightenment age was thus a controversial issue; it remains so. Bayle's position within this process remains a matter of oppositional appraisals and conflicting opinions. For some interpreters he is a defender of fideism who follows an antirational strategy by attacking a vast variety of theories and opinions in order to demonstrate the primacy of revelation, because – as Bayle argued many times – faith is built on the ruins of reason.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, other interpreters regard Bayle's position as a commitment to atheism, or at any rate as a form of crypto-atheism.<sup>10</sup> He has been seen as a thinker influenced by the spirit of Descartes who applied the concept of rational evidence and scientific certainty to the field of literary criticism. Elisabeth Labrousse has observed that these at first sight incompatible philosophical traditions and methods overlap in Bayle's attitude and works, who could thus be characterised as an 'érudit cartésien'.<sup>11</sup> Modern scholars have emphasised and at the same time transformed this characteristic: Bayle, standing midway between the revelatory nature of faith and critical rationalism, anticipates as it were a postmodern anti-dogmatic pluralism of patterns. Defending the difference between conflicting discourses or oppositional

<sup>8</sup> See Stricker N., *Die maskierte Theologie von Pierre Bayle*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte (Berlin: 2003) 36–38.

<sup>9</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 292; Popkin R.H. – Goldie M., "Scepticism, Priestcraft, and Toleration", in Goldie M. – Wokler R. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: 2006) 79–87, here 87.

<sup>10</sup> 'Many antiphilosophes denounce Bayle as a pseudo-fideist, crypto-atheist, and secret follower of Spinoza although few devoted the close attention to fighting his arguments for toleration': see Israel J., "Tolerance and Intolerance in the Writings of the Antiphilosophes (1750–1789)", in Laursen J.C. – Villaverde M.J. (eds.), *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought* (Plymouth: 2012) 193–206, here 202. With regard to the controversies in trying to categorise Bayle in terms of 'fideism', 'atheism', or 'scepticism' etc. see Labrousse E., *Bayle* (Oxford: 1983) 31–32 and Labrousse E., *Pierre Bayle. Hétérodoxie et rigorisme* (The Hague: 1964), vol. II. See also the approach to Bayle's material method in Selcer D., "The Materialist Encyclopedia", in Selcer D., *Philosophy and the Book: Early Modern Figures of Material Inscription* (London – New York: 2010) 89–94.

<sup>11</sup> Labrousse E., "Le paradoxe de l'érudit cartésien Pierre Bayle" in *Religion, érudition et critique à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup>* (Paris: 1968) 53–70. A revised analysis and critical examination of Bayle's 'Cartesian' erudition is offered by Mori G., *Tra Descartes e Bayle. Poirer e la Teodicea* (Bologna: 1990).



opinions, he did justice to a cultural diversity of narratives instead of presupposing the idea of one truth.<sup>12</sup>

The Cartesian methodology and its pretension to logical evidence could not be satisfying for a thinker whose style could be characterised as 'lustvolle Narrativität' (narrative relish) and who respected even the plurality of historical narratives and the circumstantiality of historical phenomena.<sup>13</sup> With regard to the pluralisation of literary genres, journalistic media, and learned discourses within the world of letters in the era of the early Enlightenment, Bayle's critical approach could be seen as an attempt to conceptualise a kind of 'functional equivalent' to the Cartesian method of doubt: historical critique as the source of certainty.<sup>14</sup> But this historical critique does not mean that Bayle complies with the rigorous normative standards of learned critique as they were expounded in late seventeenth-century discussions: a rational standard for scholarly publications which also demands compliance with rational methods of inquiring the truth. 'Das Stichwort dafür heißt in Deutschland unparteyisch' ('The keyword for this in Germany is "impartial"').<sup>15</sup> As Jaumann has shown, this type of impartial critique is not engaged in the condemnation of moral failures or in questions of morality at all. The critic is responsible for the exposure of logical faults, and his assigned task is the strict differentiation of true and false propositions, the epistemological analysis of statements and opinions; in short, the realm of theoretical reason.

But there is also another type of learned critique, involving practical and theoretical aspects of critical examination, that leads us to Pierre Bayle and his requirement for historical truth or the truthfulness of the historian.<sup>16</sup> Bayle's concept of *impartiality* is not focused on the impartial position of a critic, who, presenting a rigorous analysis, issues a judgement and thus relieves the reader of their burden. Instead, given the ambiguity of Bayle's demonstrations, the audience is challenged and involved in the process of criticism. The reader is not absolved from responsibility. Nor does Bayle separate the levels of theoretical argumentation and moral acceptability. Even though he demands an adherence to historical truth, he acknowledges, at the same time, the intricacy of discourses and

<sup>12</sup> See Neumeister S., "Pierre Bayle und der Mythos. Postmoderne Lektüre eines protestantischen Querdenkers", in Neumeister S. (ed.), *Frühauflklärung* (Munich: 1994) 127–148, here 141–143.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem* 143.

<sup>14</sup> Jaumann, "Frühe Aufklärung als historische Kritik" 167.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem* 152.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem* 154–155.

their consequences in social, religious, or political life. The hide-and-seek Bayle seems to play with his readers is effected by the character of his philosophical and historiographical works, most of all in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. In his critical works he deals with different meanings of *impartiality* or *désintéressement*.

### *Bayle's Critical Project – the Genesis of the Dictionnaire*

Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, first published in 1696 and reprinted in revised and extended editions, was something akin to a 'best-seller' in the learned world of the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The dictionary was not only well received in academic circles. There was hardly a research library or private collection in the European Republic of Letters that did not own an edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*. For some of his readers, the *Dictionary's* copiousness guaranteed a delightful reading experience, a delicious course of losing oneself. It was of the widest public interest. Viewed as a milestone of sceptical philosophizing, it was an arsenal of instruments for writers of the eighteenth century, a reservoir of argumentation, critical analysis, and debunking of deficient theories, false citations, or insufficient interpretations.

At the same time it provoked criticism – not only by theologians – in the fields of erudition and academic studies on account of its lack of systematic coherence, its apparent arbitrariness concerning the choice of authors (a mixture of ancient scholars, biblical figures, and contemporary thinkers) without any perceptible principle of selection.<sup>18</sup> Why do we have an article on Aristotle but none on Plato? Why is Descartes, the foremost figure of the new sciences, only mentioned in various places and not himself the subject of an article, while the most comprehensive article is dedicated to the philosophy of Spinoza?

For contemporary as well as for later readers the principles according to which Bayle selected topics, philosophical problems, and debates are not transparent. The *Dictionary* seems to have no decisive disposition of matter – apart from the alphabetical arrangement of the articles. It irritated readers because of the varying proportions of the articles as well

<sup>17</sup> With regard to the historical circumstances see Lieshout H.H.M. van, *The Making of Pierre Bayle's 'Dictionnaire Historique et Critique'*. *Studies of the Pierre Bayle Institute, Nijmegen* 30 (Amsterdam – Utrecht: 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Bayle covers only deceased scholars.

as the confusing, oblique strategy of discussing ostensibly minor facts or circumstances. The criticism focused furthermore on the disproportionately destructive criticism of the presentation of historical materials.<sup>19</sup> Bayle's recommendation of Pyrrhonian scepticism and his esteem for a sceptical position was a stumbling block for many scholars of the early Enlightenment.

Above all, however, Bayle provoked massive attacks because on the one hand he respected non-believers and atheistic philosophers insofar as they proved their morality, honesty, or even sincerity with regard to how they conducted their lives (for example Epicurus, Spinoza, or Manichean philosophers), while on the other hand he unabashedly denounced Christians guilty of cupidity, falseness, and sexual vices (see for example Bayle's portrayal of the biblical king David). In particular, the obscenity of the narrative parts integrated into his critical articles, as well as his apparent liberal understanding of sexual morality, created scandal.

As an appendix to the second edition of his *Dictionary*, Bayle published four comprehensive so-called clarifications (*Eclaircissements*) to refute these accusations, to assert his orthodoxy, and above all to defend the serious impact of his critical intentions. Bayle justified his use of criticism as an instrument for surveying traditional convictions in all fields of knowledge with respect to their partiality, i.e. their lack of objectivity, or, in the words of Bayle, their failure to display *désintéressement*. He asserted the aim of laying open all the subtle kinds of partiality, hidden persuasive strategies, tendentious interpretations, and misleading proofs with regard to historical traditions, and of deconstructing the driving forces in these traditions, like the predominance of private interests, the corruption of man's will by his passions or vices, the weakness of the human mind, and the narrowness of reasoning that manifests itself in insincerity and untruthfulness. Showing the vanity of human striving for perfect knowledge and the fallibility of man's opinions, doctrines, rational faculties and scientific proofs, he not only presented – indirectly – a defence of impartiality, but at the same time proposed a reform of practical philosophy.

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<sup>19</sup> Exemplarily formulated in the treatise of Reimann Jakob Friedrich, *Versuch einer Critique über das Dictionaire Historique & Critique des Mr. Bayle* (Halle, Renger: 1711); on this topic see Jaumann H., "Jakob Friedrich Reimmanns Bayle-Kritik und das Konzept der 'Historia literaria'. Mit einem Anhang über Reimmanns Periodisierung der deutschen Literaturgeschichte", in Mulsow M. – Zedelmaier H. (eds.), *Skepsis, Providenz, Polyhistorie. Jakob Friedrich Reimann (1668–1743)* (Tübingen: 1998) 200–213, here 200–202.

Expounding the problem of natural morality and the appeal to moral reason are recurrent themes in Bayle's works and, as I would like to underline, the question of natural morality is the systematic centre of his methodical critique in the fields of historiography. Particularly in this regard, the question arises whether morality is independent of religion or dogmatic convictions. Morality has to be a sphere of individual consciousness common to all human beings. It seems to be independent of culture, nationality, or faith. In this sense Bayle 'set the stage for the development of the social scientific explanations and naturalistic moral evaluations that were to characterize much of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought'.<sup>20</sup>

Bayle represented a manifold concept of impartiality:

First, as a *moral issue* based on a concept of prudence (*prudentia*), it is a practical power of judgement. Impartiality qualifies not only a private or individual attitude of reasoning power but leads to an inter-subjective dimension of practical philosophy which is the fundament of Bayle's generic requirement for tolerance.

Secondly, in an *epistemological sense*, impartiality is the relevant point of reference for categorising the criterion of historical truth (*vérité des faits*) in contrast to the truth of reason (*vérité de raison*). Bayle maintains that there is a specific type of evidence and certainty ensured by reflection on historical facts, processes, and circumstances: a logic of historical truth. In this context Bayle expounds the problems of rational certitude, calling into question the prevalence of scientific norms and methodical standards and emphasizing the restricted range of human reasoning.

Thirdly, impartiality also represents an *anthropological approach* to the human condition – having a bearing upon the theological substantiation of man's nature, weakness of mind, and the corruptibility of will power – which deals with psychological presuppositions of partisanship, with the genesis of prejudices, credulity, and opinion making. With regard to personal living conditions as well as cultural circumstances, Bayle analyses for example the motifs of placing trust in authorities, the inclination to discipleship, the emergence of ignorance or opportunism – with the result that most partisanship seems to arise due to private advantages and *amour-propre* (the Greek *philautia*).

Fourthly, in the area of philological and historiographical research, impartiality stands for a *theory and practice of critique*. This new way of

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<sup>20</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 295.

practicing critique is affiliated with the humanistic tradition and the formation of a critical philology; it is also well grounded in the contemporary controversies concerning biblical critique (for example with regard to Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, 1682) and in a specific way it has recourse to the methodical proceedings of philosophical scepticism (in which context Michel de Montaigne is one of the most important precursors).

Fifthly, as an *educational principle* it refers to procedural methods involving the participants in critical discourse. Bayle characterises not only the different levels of partiality: he also focuses on different kinds of recipients taking part in the process of forming opinions within the Republic of Letters. These can be a) authors and historians with their responsibility for unbiased historical documentation; b) interpreters and critics of literary history asked to assume a critical office, i.e. to decide about evidence like an incorruptible judge, to judge from the point of view of a stranger or an uninvolved spectator; c) last but not least the audience or the common reader of dictionaries, encyclopaedic works, and historiographical compendia, who must train their impartial judgement as a path leading to individual moral veracity.<sup>21</sup>

Bayle thus prepares a toolbox of historical criticism. Emphasizing his desire not to act as a controversialist, he outlines a conceptualization of critical impartiality. The aspects of detachment and critical independence sketched above come together in Bayle's works.

But how could such an attitude of moral integrity based on the incorruptibility of judgement be achieved? In the following I will first of all try to outline how Bayle, by confronting the Cartesian philosophy of rational certainty with the evidence of historical facts, expounds the problems of evident or certain knowledge. This is the foundation for distinguishing between rational and historical truth. Against this background the subsequent task will be to reconstruct Bayle's critical project.

### *The Cartesian Impact on Literary Criticism*

The development of the so-called new science in the seventeenth century, associated with writers such as Thomas Hobbes, Francis Bacon, Galileo

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<sup>21</sup> Treskow I. von, "Der Zorn des Andersdenkenden. Pierre Bayle, das 'Historisch-Kritische Wörterbuch' und die Entstehung der Kritik", in Dülmen R. van – Rauschenbach S. (eds.), *Denkwelten um 1700. Zehn intellektuelle Profile* (Cologne: 2002) 1–22.

Galilei, and above all René Descartes, and the establishment of Cartesian philosophy, could be characterised as the primacy of a new method of philosophizing. Based on a kind of methodical doubt serving to eliminate prejudices and to abandon dogmatic assumptions and unproven doctrines, it pursued a transformed method of radical scepticism. The Cartesian theory of certainty, founded on the criteria of clarity and distinction, presupposes a type of rationality or verifiable rational knowledge based on mathematical principles of proof and the giving of evidence. As distinguished from this kind of rational truth, Descartes' critique of humanism or historical studies, is, all in all, quite unmistakable. In a famous section of his *Recherche de la vérité* he states that we have to recognise clearly 'the difference which separates the sciences from the simple knowledge-by-acquaintance [*connaissance*] which is acquired without any discourse of reason, such as languages, history, geography, and in general whatever depends on experience alone'.<sup>22</sup> In Descartes' opinion, it is actually a waste of time to acquaint oneself with all the facts and phenomena of the empirical world and its cultural or intellectual history. Nobody should burden his memory with useless stories and philological testimonies or devote his leisure to the study of classical languages. Descartes reduces the pursuit of *matters of fact* to a foolish adventure, good for the stuff of dreams. With this anti-historical stance he underscores the irrelevance of historical knowledge. Given the contingency of historical incidents, and the fact that historical knowledge is based on experience, it could neither be the foundation of provable truth nor a matter for epistemology. The history of literary traditions lacks scientific evidence. Indeed, it is the field of uncertainty par excellence. Against this background, moreover, Descartes designates practical philosophy as a sphere of presumptions and probabilities only. Assuming that the weak-mindedness of human affairs makes it impossible to formulate general principles of moral truth, we can only seriously work with a *morale par provision*, as Descartes asserts.

The reconstruction of the historical constitutions of former civilizations, laws, and languages as well as the study of ancient literary texts, philosophical sources, literary traditions, or monuments of fine arts, as well as the history of sciences and wisdom, was, to his mind, largely useless. In a restricted sense it could serve as moral education by providing historical models of virtuous men and only in this instance could it be helpful as a means of forming judgement.

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<sup>22</sup> Descartes, *La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle* 6–7.

But this is just a concession and Descartes cautions far more vigorously against the risks of losing one's sense for the actual world. Similarly, the Cartesian philosopher Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) in his work *De la recherche de la vérité* (*Search for Truth. In which is treated the nature of human mind and the use that must be made of it to avoid error in the sciences* (1674–1675)) censures the behaviour of all those savants who do not care for the perfection of their soul but spend their time acquiring fame, public reputation, and the aura of extraordinary importance. Self-satisfied as they are, these men are the advocates of historical erudition, which, in Malebranche's view, is a sphere of illusions and curiosity.<sup>23</sup>

As a counterpart to this challenge influenced by Cartesianism, Pierre Bayle accentuates a specific kind of certainty in historical studies. Bayle's conceptualization of historical criticism affirms a type of justness based on the attitude of impartiality and objectivity. It emerges from the critical discussion of historical narratives, ancient testimonies, and critical enquiry in literary history. The analysis of philosophical debates and controversial discussions leads to a critical revision of historical sources and doctrinal traditions. First of all, in a negative way, it makes one receptive to a specific truth about human knowledge: its fallibility.

As we will see, Bayle goes so far as to value the certainty of historical facts much higher than the certainty of pure intellectual knowledge, be it the apparent evidence of mathematical principles, logical laws, or epistemological propositions. These are only products of the mind without any necessary relation to the world of human beings and their history. In short: for Bayle, the specific evidence of matters of fact is much more certain, dependable, and useful than any scientific knowledge constructed by the mind.

### *Bayle's Programmatic Conceptualisation of Impartiality*

To underscore the evidence of historical truth Bayle conceptualises a method of critique. His design for a critical epistemology concerning matters of fact – and abandoning the primacy of matters of reason – is the

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<sup>23</sup> Malebranche Nicolas, "De la recherche de la vérité", in *Oeuvres complètes de Malebranche*, eds. A.-E. Genoude – H. Lourdoux (Paris: 1837), vol. I, Préface, XX; see Jauermann, "Frühe Aufklärung als historische Kritik" 151–152.



topic of a treatise published in the year 1692, entitled *Projet et fragmens d'un Dictionnaire critique*.<sup>24</sup>

As a sort of methodical guidance or a code for practising literary criticism it serves to dissect all kinds of partiality, whether private or collective, epistemic or popular, or a consequence of indoctrination, mere fancy, or hearsay. Bayle tries to reveal all kinds of unproven authority based on political sanctions or institutional strategies. Furthermore, Bayle reveals the anthropological conditions of man's receptivity for prejudgements that dominate the human mind and guide man's actions. He analyses the cultural and socio-historical climates contributing to the growth of prejudice. Based on this anatomy of mentalities and opinions he formulates a programme in support of impartial judgement.

The arrangement of the treatise – it is composed as a letter to his friend Rondel – enables Bayle to stage a virtual dialogue. It lets him anticipate irritations and refutations and discuss potential objections. Bayle announces nothing less than a critical dictionary, based on a comprehensive compendium of all kinds of faults.

What should the critical reader or the learned man think of such an unconventional dictionary, composed as a collection of all kinds of errors? And what could be the use of such a book? Why should a scholar like Bayle, well known as a man of wit, restrict his intellectual capabilities to an archaeology of falsehood? Let us examine his apologetic explanations and follow his textual strategy of embracing the reader in order to make him acquainted with the programme of literary criticism:

Sir, You will doubtless be surprised at the resolution I have taken. I have resolved to make the largest compilation I can of the faults which are met with in Dictionaries, and not to confine my self within these bounds, however large and extensive, but to make sallies upon all sorts of authors, whenever occasion offers.

What! will you say, a man from whom we expected quite another thing, and much rather a work of reasoning than a compilation, is he going to engage in an enterprize which requires a much greater expence of body than of mind? It is certainly a very wrong step. He undertakes to correct Dictionaries; His most malicious enemies could not have prescribed to him a harder task [...] It is worse than going to fight monsters [...] in fine, it is, the penance which ought to be enjoined those turbulent men who have

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<sup>24</sup> Bayle Pierre, *Projet et fragmens d'un Dictionnaire critique* (Rotterdam, Reinier Leers: 1692; reprint, Geneva: 1970).



abused their leisure and the credulity of the people, to vent under the name and authority of the Revelation all sorts of Chimera's [...] I pity him.<sup>25</sup>

What could be the outcome of such a huge project, Bayle wonders. Would it not be better to

leave this employment to those robust constitutions who can study sixteen hours a day without prejudice to their health; who are indefatigable in citations, and in all the other functions of a transcriber, and much better qualified to acquaint the public with *matters of fact* than with *reasonings*?<sup>26</sup>

Bayle does not regard his project as a mere transcription of all kinds of documents and authors – an incidental and polemical attack against humanistic erudition. He does not want to disclaim reasoning, but rather to establish a critical revision of those documents and texts which were the groundwork of historical dictionaries in his time, above all the historical dictionary of Louis Moréri (1643–1680).<sup>27</sup>

In his preface to the second edition Bayle formulates critical remarks about Moréri's dictionary which was in those days a standard work of lexicography, but also criticised because of its faultiness. Bayle emphasises the importance of Moréri's book and in general the common benefit of a comprehensive dictionary which is able to serve as an educational textbook intended for the popular reader.

There are few books of such general use as an Historical Dictionary. [...] [A]s an Historical Dictionary ought to serve instead of a library to the ignorant, it should be so contrived that the reader may find perspicuity enough in the work itself to understand whatever is told in it without any other assistance.<sup>28</sup>

But the defectiveness of Moréri's dictionary renders it useless, because, although several times corrected, it was full of faults and nevertheless sold in a great many editions. Bayle argued that it would be a great service

<sup>25</sup> Bayle Pierre, "A Dissertation which was printed before some essays or fragments of this work in the year MDCXCII, under the title of, A Project of a Critical Dictionary, in a letter to Mr du Rondel, Professor of the Belles Lettres at Maestricht", in Bayle Pierre, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle. The second edition. Carefully collated with several editions of the Original by Mr. Des Maizeaux*, 5 vols. (London, J. J. & P. Knapton: 1734–1738), vol. V, 784.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem V, 784 (my italics, A. E.).

<sup>27</sup> Louis Moréri's *Le grand Dictionnaire historique, ou mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane*, first edition Lyon 1674, was reprinted in many expanded editions and translations up to the late eighteenth century.

<sup>28</sup> Bayle Pierre, "Mr. Bayle's Preface", in Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical* vol. V, 685–686.

to the Republic of Letters to contribute to the correction of this *Dictionary*.<sup>29</sup> But the unmanageable multitude of errors deforming it led Bayle to finally abandon the effort to improve Moréri's articles. Instead, he decided to compile a critical dictionary of his own. The design is given in the treatise mentioned above. But Bayle's critical remarks on Moréri's insufficient work nevertheless do make clear some important aspects of Bayle's plea for impartiality. He accuses Moréri of a dubious handling of literary sources:

with regard to the Greek, and Latin Historians, he has generally consulted only Vossius, and [...] with respect to Ecclesiastical affairs and Ecclesiastical writers he has hardly consulted any but Baronius, Spondanus, Godeau, and Father Labbe.

Moréri sometimes seems to be guided by bad faith, seeking to deceive the reader and to hide his own incapacity, trying 'to persuade them falsely that he turned over an infinite number of books'.<sup>30</sup> His practice of abbreviating historiographical documents and his partial selection of reported facts was motivated by the false pretence of protecting the reader against immoral influences. On Bayle's view Moréri's tendentious manner of description falls short with regard to the obligations of a historian:

One of the things wherein the editors of the Historical Dictionary have succeeded best, is that they have reduced to more reasonable bounds the excessive praises which Moreri had prodigally bestowed upon a great many persons, and the great slanders that he had thrown upon many others. He was guided by the spirit of a declaimer who frequently mounts the pulpit, and did not remember that he assumed the *character of an Historian*. [...] There remain still in it several flatteries and injurious reflexions which ought to be left out, and it is certain that by striking out some encomiums a person will do a good office to those on whom they were bestowed, and will *act not only from a principle, of love for truth, but likewise from a motive of brotherly charity*.<sup>31</sup>

The trustworthy 'character of an Historian', pursuing truth without flattery and interest, stands at the same time for a moral attitude: the grace of charity. The impartial historian is necessarily also a virtuous character. Here we also have an appeal to peaceableness and justness.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem V, 685.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem V, 687.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem V, 690 (my italics, A. E.).

<sup>32</sup> The theological connotations – reverence for truth and charity – may not least allude to the fact that 'impartiality' is a characteristic of divine wisdom (Christ as incarnation of

In contrast to all those tendentious encyclopaedic works circulating in the learned world of his times, Bayle accentuates his aim of unmasking tendentious statements, and of revealing the falseness of citations, the varieties of misleading interpretations, and the careless presentations of historical positions. This is an open attack against the philological states of dictionaries or comprehensive encyclopaedic works as well as a critique of scholarship. Bayle intends to disclose the errors of thinking which cause so many controversies and political conflicts.

Bayle is interested in documents which reveal, either wittingly or not, the intention of indoctrination. He also analyses the anthropological motivations used to convince the public reader through his self-interest, or to disqualify the positions of opponents. Bayle calls for a restoration of the background of the philosophical battles of books without any taking of sides.

By means of a critical revision of historical documents, debates, and actors as well a reconstruction of the historical context, Bayle tries to unmask the strategies of individual interests as well as the strategies of political or denominational parties, institutions, or schools in order to bring the reader to form an opinion about the facts for himself. It is a performance and training of both judgement and self-awareness of the reliability of interpretations.

In Bayle's eyes, prudence (practical reasoning) requires the autonomy of critical thinking and self-awareness. According to this ideal of moral behaviour the critical historian has to preserve independence of judgement at all costs. In this sense, Bayle's enterprise of criticism calls for the re-establishment of impartial judgement by presenting a code of practice. Bayle gives a first sketch or structural fundament, like an architect presenting a model of later building, 'only to shew by way of abridgment,

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the *sapientia dei*), mentioned in the Epistle of St. James (James 3.13–18). Luther's translation contains an early citation of the term 'unparteiisch' (impartial): 'Wer ist weise vnd klug vnter euch? der erzeige mit seinem guten wandel seine werck, in der sanfftmut vnd weisheit. Habt ir aber bitterm neid vnd zank inn ewrem hertzen, so rhümet euch nicht, und lieget nicht widder die warheit. Denn das ist nicht die weisheit, die von oben herab kompt, sondern irdisch, menschlich und Teuffelisch. Denn wo neid vnd zank ist, da ist vnordnung und eitel böse ding. Die weisheit aber von oben her, ist auffß erst *keusch*, darnach *fridsam*, *gelinde*, *lesst ir sagen*, *vol barmhertzigkeit vnd güter früchte*, *vnparteiisch*, *on heucheley*. Die frucht aber der gerechtigkeit wird geseet im fride, denen, die den fride halten' (my italics, A.E.). See Luther Martin, *Biblia das ist, die gantze Heilige Schrift Deutsch* (Wittenberg, Hanns Lufft: 1534) fol. CLXXVIII r.

with what materials, how much expence, and how many hands it might be afterwards raised'.<sup>33</sup>

Metaphorically speaking, it is a *hunting of errors* – not a pursuit of wisdom – to discover the false opinions of mankind, to demonstrate the vanity of scientific knowledge, to debunk the dream of perfect wisdom. This hunt guarantees a rich booty:

no Prince, whatever care he takes for laying the toils, and disposing all things for a great hunting match, can be more certain of catching a great many wild beasts, than a *learned critic*, who goes in chace of errors, can be certain of discovering a great many of them.<sup>34</sup>

The critical impact on literary history is the enlightening of man's curiosity and wit, performing exemplarily the practice of critical reflection and thereby opening the theatre of human life. For, as Bayle asks, 'would a theatre of these faults in as many large volumes, be, in your opinion, less diverting or instructive than that of human life?'<sup>35</sup>

The metaphors Bayle uses, i.e. the *hunting of errors* or the *theatrum vitae* and, in many instances, the analogy of a *law court*, illustrate on the one hand the performative character of his concept of criticism which involves the reader. On the other hand, Bayle accentuates the publicity of criticism which has to be embedded in the open space of debates. As a contribution to the formation of opinions, criticism is required to hear all parties and to show tolerance to dissidents. Like a play or a spectacular performance it stimulates public interest in participation in this process. From this perspective, criticism underscores the moral dimension of popular erudition, for 'men are rather touched by popular and plausible thoughts, than by reasonings the most conformable to the rules of Logic'.<sup>36</sup>

The first step for Bayle is to adopt a sceptical attitude – even with regard to authorities or famous learned men.<sup>37</sup> Therefore even the works of Joseph Scaliger, Salmasius (Claude de Saumaise), of the Jesuit Denis Pétau, or the great Isaac Casaubon – to mention only a few – are not reliable of their own accord. They need to be discussed critically. That

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<sup>33</sup> Bayle, "A Project of a Critical Dictionary", vol. V, 785, quoting from Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem V, 785 (my italics, A. E.).

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem V, 786. Bayle in this case refers to Theodor Zwinger's *Theatrum vitae humanae*.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem V, 786.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

means we should always consider not only one party or two opposing positions but we should rather compare several statements in order to have an equilibrium of opinions. This is one of Bayle's maxims for a critical dictionary:

But in a design like this, it is not too much, with respect to many things, to compare together four pieces published successively; two by the assailant, and two by the assaulted; and I dare even say, that in some particulars this is not sufficient. [...] [A]fter the reading of a critical book, we must suspend our judgement till we have seen what the criticised author or his friends have to say.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, we should always be aware of the author's motivation and his individual psychological constitution in relation to personal interests. Even authors of the first rank sometimes 'let slip the greatest number of faults: whether because they are too bold in their decisions, and too much addicted to new ways, or whether they yield sooner or later to the vanity of distinguishing themselves by the multitude of their writings'.<sup>39</sup> In short, weakness of moral character (i.e. of will) and lack of personal integrity results in the fact that even the critical comments of learned men are often partial and unreliable.

The theatre of faults presents a kaleidoscope of selfishness, showing as it does striving for innovations and novelty, for personal fame and public recognition. In the historiography of literary documents we can find a plurality of the vanities of the human mind, a universe of different kinds of partiality arising from the weakness of man. With his critical analysis Bayle brings to the fore aspects of the human condition. Again there is a moral intention: *ex negativo* we are asked to recognise the true character of a virtuous man and, above all, the sincere historian.

The general purpose of Bayle's project is thus to compile a critical and historical dictionary that functions as a benchmark:

Were it not to be wished there was extant a Critical Dictionary, to which recourse might be had, in order to be ascertained whether what we find in other Dictionaries and in all sorts of other books be true? This would be the touch-stone of other books; and you know a man some-what precise in his language, who would not fail to call a work of his nature, *The Insurance-office of the Republic of Letters*.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> With reference to Casaubon's critical work on Baronius. Ibidem V, 787.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem V, 786.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem V, 787–788.

Impartialité, neutralité *and* désintéressement:  
*The Critical Task of the True Historian*

In his article on the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, Bayle provides a design for practising impartial judgement. In a manner analogous to the procedure in law courts and the principles of a just trial for ascertaining the truth, he distinguishes between the positions of an *advocate* and that of a *reporter observing the trial* to explain the different behaviour of *Stoic* versus *Academic or sceptical* philosophers:

Notez que l'Antiquité avoit deux sortes des Philosophes; les uns ressembloient aux *Avocats*, & les autres aux *Rapporteurs d'un Procès*. Ceux-là, en prouvant leurs opinions, cachotent autant qu'ils pouvoient l'endroit foible de leur cause, & et l'endroit fort de leurs Adversaires. Ceux-ci, savoir les Sceptiques ou les Académiciens, représentoient *fidèlement & sans nulle partialité* le fort & et le foible des deux Partis opposez.<sup>41</sup>

The doubting, double-minded character of Chrysippus, attested by different historical reports, here represents a kind of Stoic method to diminish oppositional statements. The duplicity of Chrysippus is characterised as a strategy to make the arguments of the opponent weaker than they are. As Bayle points out, the Stoic philosopher argues that anyone who intends to demonstrate a truth should mention the arguments of their counterpart only in a marginal way, imitating the *advocate*. Hiding both the weak point of his own position and also the strengths of the adversary, the Stoic advocate simulates the persuasive strategies of the sophistic orator in Bayle's view. Invigorating the weak case in such a way that it seems to be the stronger one, the Stoic dogmatist operates like a fairground trickster. From this point of view Chrysippus not only stands for a fraudulent misrepresentation of facts in order to take an unfair advantage. He is also the prototype of moral perfidiousness, who misleads the audience to suspend critical judgement and to concentrate on tricky means of rhetorical persuasion.

We will see that Bayle does not discard principles of Stoic philosophy at all but attacks this open call for imposture and selfish partisanship. In contrast the Sceptic follows a precept of argumentation, which Cicero – with reference to the Academic tradition, to Platonic and Socratic doctrines, but most of all to Aristotle – in his rhetorical writings has exposed as a

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<sup>41</sup> Bayle Pierre, "Chrysippe", in *Dictionnaire historique et critique. Cinquième édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée, avec la vie de l'auteur par M. Des Maizeaux*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam et al., P. Brunel et al.: 1740), vol. II, 169 (G) (my italics, A.E.).

basic principle: *in utramque partem disserere*.<sup>42</sup> The sceptic philosopher stands for this method of a sincere, open, and fair presentation of arguments, considering both adverse parties in order to balance the strength and the weakness of opposed reasons. Like a *reporter* he has to adopt a neutral position. In Bayle's view this distinction of philosophical methods characterises in a prototypical way the behaviour of the Christian philosophers of his time, especially with regard to the theological schools.

La Religion ne souffre pas l'Esprit Académicien; elle veut qu'on nie, ou que l'on affirme. On n'y trouve point de Juges qui ne soient parties en même tems: on y trouve une infinité d'Auteurs qui plaident la cause selon la Maxime de Chrysippe, je veux dire qui se tiennent dans le simple fonction d'Avocat; mais on n'y trouve presque point de Rapporteurs: car si quelqu'un représente de bonne foi, & sans nul déguisement, toute la force du parti contraire, il se rend odieux, & suspect, & il court risque d'être traité comme un infame prévaricateur. La prudence humaine, la politique, *l'intérêt de Parti*, ne sont pas toujours la cause de ce qu'on agit en bon Avocat purement & simplement. Un zèle charitable inspire aussi cette conduite [...].<sup>43</sup>

Whereas contemporary theologians are impulsively involved in religious controversies and, like the sophistic advocate, lose a sense of fairness or the commensurability of means, the true historian, without resort to dishonesty, has to operate like an independent reporter, even if he risks making a vast number of enemies. But even this is 'a proof for the author's sincerity as a defender of the truth'.<sup>44</sup>

Even though the term 'impartialité' does not seem to be used frequently in Bayle's work, it is a central topic with regard to the love of truth, brotherly charity, and sincerity of judgement. The avoidance of partiality, in Bayle's ideas, goes hand in hand with the development of analytical faculties, rational judgement, and the moral qualities of self-possession.

The ideal historian should be like the Italian Pierre-Jean Capriata (1639–1663), whom Bayle presents as both an excellent historian and jurist in one person:

<sup>42</sup> See also Anita Traninger's contribution in this volume.

<sup>43</sup> Bayle, "Chrysippe", in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* II, 169 (G).

<sup>44</sup> The perfection of a historical record is affirmed by the fact that it is displeasing for all members of different parties or nations. This is 'a proof for the author's sincerity as a defender of the truth, who never tries to flirt with someone's agreement or acclamation'. Bayle, "Eclaircissement 4", in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* IV, 654 (my translation, A.E.).



CAPRIATA (Pierre-Jean), Jurisconsulte & Historien [...]. Il expose les faits avec une grande *netteté*: il en *développe les motifs*, & les *instrumens*, & les *suites*; & il ne tombe, ni dans les ménagemens d'un flateur, ni dans la malignité d'un Censeur chagrin. Il se vante d'avoir *gardé l'équilibre*, sans aucune *partialité*, ni pour la France, ni pour l'Espagne; & il prétend que ceux qui n'ont pas bien reconnu ce *désintéressement* s'en doivent prendre à eux-mêmes.<sup>45</sup>

In Bayle's view, Capriata's historiographical work provides an example of his impartiality (and here Bayle uses the term *impartialité*), his neutrality, and his independence: 'Je reviens à Capriata, & j'observe qu'il donne pour un exemple de son *impartialité* ce qu'il écrit sur les deux Guerres du Mon-serrat. [...] Je prouve aussi sa *neutralité*, son *indépendance* [...]'.<sup>46</sup>

To explain the concept of *désintéressement* Bayle repeatedly discusses the problem of public response. The well balanced report by a truthful historian who does not side with one party and does not sympathise with any nation nonetheless risks being an assailable figure. Bayle confronts us with the paradox that the reader, guided by emotional prejudice, will often perceive impartial reports as a partial position. This psychological phenomenon is due to anthropological considerations:

Cette Observation est judicieuse, & peut servir à beaucoup de gens, qui n'accusent de *partialité un Historien*, que parce qu'ils sont remplis d'une injuste prévention. Ils se persuadent que s'il dit du bien de ceux qu'ils haïssent par *préjugé de Nation*, & par *intérêt de parti*, il tombe dans la flatterie, & que s'il dit du mal de ceux qu'ils aiment par un semblable motif, il s'abandonne à une passion maligne. Ils ne s'examinent pas eux-mêmes, & ne voient pas que *leur propre partialité est cause qu'ils trouvent partial cet Historien*. [...] ils en jugent ainsi lors même que *l'Historien s'est tenu dans un parfait équilibre*. Leurs plaintes & leurs doléances sont l'effet de leur passion, & non pas, comme ils le prétendent, l'effet de celle de l'Historien.<sup>47</sup>

Bayle makes it clear that the reader or receiver of a historical report has to be aware of his own affections or inclinations. Otherwise, the partiality of the audience discredits the efforts of the best historian.<sup>48</sup> For this reason general erudition is a necessary precondition for the establishment of the

<sup>45</sup> Bayle, "Capriata", in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* II, 48 (my italics, A.E.).

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem II, 48–49 (C) (my italics, A.E.).

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem II, 48 (C).

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem: 'Mais si un Auteur pouvoit parvenir à surmonter tous les obstacles, les pièges & les surprises de ses passions, les préjugés de l'enfance, les opinions préconçues, le pli qu'il a pris avant que de s'engager à faire une Histoire; si enfin il écrivoit sincèrement le bien & le mal de chaque parti, sans pencher d'aucun côté, trouveroit-il des Lecteurs assez équitables pour lui rendre la justice qui lui est due?' (my italics, A.E.).



faculty of judgement, to avoid partisanship, and to show that this is the essential base of political and social peace.

Nevertheless the truthful historian remains an ideal figure, like the Stoic sage, because of man's inability to be totally indifferent, due to the difficulty of controlling his passions entirely and the deep impulses of the human soul:

J'ai dit ailleurs, qu'il est quelquefois plus facile d'être honnête homme, que de le paroître; & je dis ici, qu'il est *quelquefois plus mal-aisé de paroître un Historien fidelle, que de l'être effectivement*. Je ne prétens pas qu'il soit facile de composer une Histoire qui représente avec une *égale sincérité* les fautes & la prudence, le tort & le droit, les pertes & les avantages, des deux partis. Il faudroit être *l'Homme sans Passions ou le Sage des Stoïques*, cet homme qu'on ne trouvera jamais, & qui ne subsiste qu'en *idée*; il faudroit, dis-je, parvenir à cette indolence, si l'on vouloit s'assurer que l'on tiendra toujours ce juste milieu en écrivant une Histoire. [...] Or l'on ne sauroit dire combien cela indispose un Historien contre le parti le plus odieux, combien de passions secretes il contracte qui lui corrompent le jugement, & combien il s'acoutume à raconter avec plus de joie les avantages du parti le moins odieux. [...] *Ce sont des obstacles à la parfaite candeur d'un Historien, & au milieu qu'il doit tenir.* [...] Avouons donc que *c'est une chose très-difficile, que de composer une Histoire sans aucune partialité.*<sup>49</sup>

But this assessment of the factual situation does not mean that Bayle seeks to disavow the pursuit of impartiality. On the contrary, the article "Usson" reveals exactly the catalogue of virtues a true historian has to strive for, while at the same time showing that Bayle does not neglect Stoic elements as a fundament of his conceptualisation of impartiality. As we will see, the Stoic stance of temperance as a way not only of moderating the passions, but also of becoming aware of their corrupting impact, and the Academic technique of weighing opposed positions, are complementary components and conditions of an impartial judgement.

Usson is, as Bayle explains in this article, a small town situated in the Auvergne, famous as the residence of the wife of Henri IV, Margaret de Valois. There are many legends about her life and thought, and divergent historiographical narratives concerning the political circumstances. In this context, Bayle argues again for the neutrality of the historian, following the Stoic ideal of temperance:

All that are acquainted with the laws of History, will agree, that every Historian, who designs faithfully to discharge his function, ought entirely to

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem.

dispossess himself of the spirit of flattery and calumny, and put on as much as possible, such a Stoical temper, as is out of the reach of any disturbance from passion.<sup>50</sup>

The historian has to be

[i]nsensible to every thing else, he ought only to be concerned for the interest of truth, to which his duty obliges him to sacrifice the resentment of an injury, the remembrance of a favour, and even the love of his country. He ought to forget that he was born in a certain country, that he was bred up in the communion of a certain Church, that he is indebted for the making his fortune to such and such persons, and that such or such persons are his relations or friends.<sup>51</sup>

In this manner a historian 'is without father, without mother, and without pedigree'.<sup>52</sup> He has to be absolutely independent of all these bonds and obligations. To some extent he adopts the position of a stranger or external observer.<sup>53</sup> As an uninvolved judge he has to be concerned about *historiographical justice*. Knowledge of the political consequences brought about by the battle of beliefs – this is a task of the highest responsibility.

His commitment to truth has to be as strong as the commitment of a judge to justice. Again Bayle draws a parallel between the historian and the judge. In this sense literary criticism runs parallel to a procedure of jurisdiction or to the duties of the office of case-law which Bayle calls, with regard to the literary republic, the office of insurance. 'The application of all this to an Historiographer, who is a public minister of truth, is not very difficult'.<sup>54</sup>

Bayle points out that a historian who intends to arouse the interest of the public is allowed to deal with uncommon topics, to tell stories of unorthodox modes of life, or to report extraordinary opinions. Thus Bayle defends his collection of unusual topics as a means of popular erudition. But this mental scope does not suspend the obligation to historical truth. Therefore an author

<sup>50</sup> Bayle, *Dictionary Historical and Critical* V, 531 (F).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> The historian looks upon the facts like a stranger but his strong interest in *désintéressement* is at the same time a way of being involved in a processing of truth. In this sense his engagement is by no means that of a foreigner, because, as Bayle states, 'all those who depart from truth shall be equally strangers to me'. Bayle, "A Project of a Critical Dictionary" V, 796. Compare also Bastian Ronge's contribution in this volume.

<sup>54</sup> Bayle, *Dictionary Historical and Critical* V, 531 (F).

if he writes as an Historian ought not only to relate what Heretics have done, but also to shew wherein the strength and weakness of their opinions consist. This must especially be done by him, if he be himself the Commentator of his narratives; for in his commentary he must discuss things, and compare together the arguments *pro* and *con*, with all the *impartiality* [*désintéressement*] of a faithful relator.<sup>55</sup>

### *Evaluation of Historiography*

This argument leads back to Bayle's strong assumption that there is much more evidence with regard to matters of fact than to matters of reason. Against Cartesian method, he argues first with reference to an anthropological consideration:

It must therefore be granted me, that there are a great many productions of the mind of man, which are esteemed, not because they are necessary, but because they divert us: and since it is so, is it not proper to observe the falsities of authors, when there are so many men who delight to know the truth, even in things wherein their fortune is not in the least concerned?<sup>56</sup>

For Bayle it is a fact that everybody is interested in pleasing things like paintings, sculpture, or architecture, and that the most skilled painters and sculptors (like Michelangelo and Bernini) or excellent chronologists and astronomers (like Scaliger and Copernicus) are highly esteemed, although their works do not seem to be really necessary for society. But this pleasure of the eyes – Bayle refers to Cicero – is not only a manifestation of man's curiosity, it also elicits esteem and nourishes the admiration for good judges or the faculty of judgement. Accordingly, a 'scrupulous enquiry into all Historical facts, is capable of producing very great advantages',<sup>57</sup> because even philological pedantry, the checking of details, is unwittingly of great use. It could be a stimulation for the reader, eliciting his admiration for antiquity; it could inspire an enquiry into the conduct of the ancients and in many cases lead to the improvement of

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<sup>55</sup> Bayle, "A Project of a Critical Dictionary" V, 810 (my italics A.E.). Cf. Bayle, "Eclaircissemens sur certaines choses répandues dans ce Dictionnaire", in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* IV, 626: 'Il doit faire principalement cela s'il est lui-même le Commentateur de ses Récits; car c'est dans son Commentaire qu'il doit discuter les choses, & comparer ensemble les Raisons du pour & du contre avec tout le desintéressement d'un fidelle Raporteur'.

<sup>56</sup> Bayle, "A Project of a Critical Dictionary" V, 793.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem V, 794.

oneself in the mould of the former greats. Again, historiography and critical philology here are considered as a field of moral education, forming men's judgement.

But the most convincing argument Bayle presents is that pertaining to the certainty of historical truth. He maintains that '[h]istorical truths may be carried to a greater degree of certainty than what Geometrical truths are brought to'.<sup>58</sup>

What does this mean? In contrast to poetical fictions, historical truth is based on apparent existing facts, on things that have really happened. But to reach this degree of certainty a sort of historical scepticism as a manner of criticism is indispensable. In this regard, '[h]istorical enquiries are not fruitless' but of the highest use:

We certainly shew the falsity of several things, the uncertainty of several others, and the truth of several others: and thus you have some demonstrations which may be of use to many more people than Geometrical ones; [...] a great many people may profit, morally speaking, by the reading of a collection of Historical falshoods, well proved to be falshoods, though it were only by growing more circumspect in judging of other men, and more capable of avoiding the snares which satire and flattery lay on all sides for the unwary reader. Now, is it of no use to correct the bad inclination we have to make rash judgments? Is it of no use to learn not to believe lightly what we see in print?<sup>59</sup>

The critique of historiographical documents is a way of avoiding the levity of overhasty judgements and in this sense a moral advantage.

Critical historiography is not only of the highest dignity with regard to the education of practical reasoning but also with regard to the evidence of the 'truth of facts' in contrast, for example, to the abstract truth of mathematical demonstrations. For, as Bayle asks, is there a proof for the existence of mathematical objects beyond our minds, i.e. for their indubitable existence?<sup>60</sup> He does not want to disqualify rational disciplines entirely, but rather to restore the unevaluated truth of historical facts and to set new priorities with regard to the moral use of reasoning.

To this effect we shall present one final argument. Rational theology seems to be capable of demonstrating the existence of God; it seems to enable man to gain certain knowledge of God's rational nature and goodness.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem V, 795.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem V, 795.

But is this not a kind of hubris, a blasphemous overestimation of the capabilities of the human mind?

Bayle, not least under the influence of the Calvinist condemnation of man's arrogance and pride, observes that '[t]he abstract depths of Mathematics, it may be said, give us sublime ideas of the infinity of God.' But Bayle asks: '[D]o you think that a great moral good may not result from a Critical Dictionary?' Theologically and morally speaking, historical criticism gives rise to the idea of certainty. It shows examples of men's pride, of selfish opinion; in short, of cardinal faults with regard to true virtue and the spirit of the gospel. 'Now what could be imagined more proper to give man a true notion of the emptiness and vanity of the sciences, and of the weakness of his understanding, than to shew him the numberless false facts with which books abound.' The historiographical project, presenting all the kinds of human falsehoods in a comprehensive dictionary, mortifies 'man with respect to his greatest vanity, I mean his knowledge or science'.<sup>61</sup>

But this debunking of scientific progress with regard to man's weakness of will and mind is not the final word. Embedded in a theological reflection, Bayle's main approach is a moral one: 'there could be *no Logic comparable to this, to teach the justness of reasoning*'.<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusion

To sum up: Bayle's historical criticism provides a pessimistic view of the human ability to obtain knowledge. It points out a demarcation of rationality by detecting the limits of human reason. Bayle outlines a concept of moral responsibility. His provocative approach is a sort of appeal to arouse the human faculty of judgement out of its state of sleep and blindness. It calls for presence of mind as an appeal to encourage self-awareness and to invoke moral consciousness.

The critical method of detecting all kinds of untested opinions, performed in the short version of the critical dictionary and, later on, extended to an encyclopaedic project, could be seen as a guide to train awareness for practical truth, a kind of training of critical reflection. In hunting the errors of the human mind in historiographical documents, myths, and the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem V, 796. (Italics mine, A.E.)

narratives of different cultural traditions, we are, as the audience in this theatre of mankind, confronted with man's defective actions.

The general idea of Bayle's project leads to rational modesty and to the acceptance of the differences between faiths, convictions, or doctrines and accordingly of a relativism due to historical and political circumstances. By delineating epistemological aspects of certainty and true judgement concerning matters of fact, it is a plea for an *impartial morality* or *moral impartiality*, and above all for tolerance. Bayle's appeal for tolerance therefore does not necessarily designate an atheistic position, but rather an insistence on justice. Thus the critical indifference of the historian Bayle argues for is an aggregation of the Stoic ideal of temperance and the sceptic effort to certify contradictory opinions or doctrines. It is associated with a Christian concept of humility, but this does not mean abstinence of truth or intellectual resignation. It accentuates a deep insight in the uncertainty of human affairs and the overestimation of man's capabilities concerning the reliability of reason. These components, transferred to the field of the historian's duty, lead to a concept of historical criticism that does not entail the suspension of judgement, but rather the enlightenment and cultivation of justness as a moral quality of practical reasoning, common to all people. In this sense the critical project, and its claim of impartiality, is a strategy to uncover natural morality and with regard to politics an irenic project.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> As Erasmus von Rotterdam wrote in a letter to Luther (May 30, 1519): 'As for myself, I keep myself *uncommitted*, so far as I can, in hopes of being able to do more for the revival of good literature. [...] The universities are not so much to be despised as recalled to more serious studies. Things which are of such wide acceptance that they cannot be torn out of men's minds all at once should be met with argument, close-reasoned forcible argument, rather than bare assertion. Some people's poisonous propaganda is better ignored than refuted. *Everywhere we must take pains to do and say nothing out of arrogance or faction, for I think the spirit of Christ would have it so*' (my italics, A.E.). Erasmus of Rotterdam, *The Correspondence of Erasmus. Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomsons, annotated P.G. Bietenholz, *Collected Works of Erasmus* 6 (Toronto – Buffalo – London: 1982), no. 980, 392–393.

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6. A VIEW FROM NOWHERE: IMPARTIALITY  
AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY



MORALS BEFORE OBJECTIVITY:  
ON THE RELATION OF MORAL COGNITION AND MORAL  
PHILOSOPHY IN HUME

Tamás Demeter

*Summary*

In this paper I argue that Hume is implicitly committed to different epistemic values in his account of moral cognition and in the methodology of his moral philosophy. In moral cognition, i.e. in making moral judgement, Hume advocates a version of aperspectival objectivity: our moral judgements should be based on sentiments arising from an unbiased, impartial stance by taking into account the perspectives of those involved in the situation under moral consideration. In moral philosophy subjectivity is granted much more latitude and contributes to the process of theory construction: it has a positive role to play in finding analogies between divergent phenomena while drawing an accurate picture of human nature. As a consequence of this difference, moral philosophy and moral cognition are separated in Hume, and philosophical insights can enter moral evaluation through the moralist's work on tuning our moral sentiments.

*Introduction*

As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have shown, 'objectivity' is a multifaceted concept, the development of which has a long and rich history.<sup>1</sup> In their presentation, objectivity is listed among the cardinal epistemic virtues in modern times which had gone through a complex process of evolution before it emerged in a full-blown version in the nineteenth century. Several important aspects of this modern concept of objectivity that

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<sup>1</sup> Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007).

became dominant in the natural sciences derive from eighteenth-century aesthetics and moral philosophy, and as such they are partly due to the conceptual work done by David Hume.<sup>2</sup>

Although 'objectivity' as a term does not figure in Hume's writings, its conceptual relatives, namely 'impartiality' and the 'common point of view', do play an important role in them. As I will try to show, the idea of a full-blown objectivity, i.e. a perspective that is detached from the biases and distortions of *any* point of view, is alien to Hume's epistemology. Hume's aim in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739/40) is to explore the specifically human point of view and its contribution to cognition, morality and aesthetic judgement, and there is no room in its framework for a genuinely objective perspective exempt from the constraints of our constitution – and this diagnosis also holds for his *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). Objectivity in this sense is an unattainable ideal: one main lesson Hume teaches us is that we cannot transcend the boundaries of our sensitivity and cognitive constitution. We can at most aspire to be aware of the limitations inherent in and possibilities arising from them – this is the reason why all the sciences must depend, at least to some extent, on the science of human nature.<sup>3</sup> Even if genuine objectivity is beyond our reach, we still can abstract from our personal biases and individual perspective by taking the perspectives of others into account. And thereby assuming a common point of view, we can exercise impartial judgement.

Here I intend to explore how the conceptual relatives of 'objectivity' inform Hume's moral philosophy and his theory of moral cognition. In doing so, I borrow from Daston and Galison two terms designating epistemic virtues that preceded 'objectivity', namely *aperspectival objectivity* and *truth-to-nature*, and I will reconstruct Hume's position while arguing for the following claims: 1) there is an important distinction to be drawn between moral *philosophy* and moral *cognition* as Hume envisages them. Moral cognition, i.e. the process of making moral judgement, is a common part of social practice, while moral philosophy is a theoretical enterprise that, among other things, comprises a theory of moral cognition. 2) Hume maintains that *aperspectival objectivity as impartiality* is a necessary condition for moral cognition, but this kind of objectivity

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<sup>2</sup> Daston L., "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective", *Social Studies of Science* 22 (1992) 597–618.

<sup>3</sup> Hume David, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: 2007) Introduction, 4.

is intrinsically bound up with the human point of view. 3) Moral philosophy, at least as Hume conceives it, is an enterprise continuous with natural philosophy in its aims of description and explanation. *Truth-to-nature* is a chief epistemic virtue in the enterprise of Humean moral philosophy, which also indicates its continuity with contemporary natural philosophy, but it is a virtue that does not entail going aperspectival.

As Daston puts it, the essence of aperspectival objectivity is communicability, and it is about 'eliminating individual (or occasionally group) idiosyncrasies'.<sup>4</sup> Daston's concept will have to be further refined in order to be a useful tool of analysis in the context of Hume's philosophy. There are at least two different ways of being aperspectival. The first and weaker sense of the term is to understand it as detached from *any particular* human perspective, that is, to be detached from particular interests, points of view, and personal sympathies. For Hume, this stance, the 'common point of view', ensures the possibility of *impartial* evaluation and it is the essence of moral evaluation:<sup>5</sup> without being impartial one could only express personal sentiments, tastes and distastes, but not moral ones. Yet, being impartial does not amount to being genuinely aperspectival, because impartiality so understood is still a profoundly *human* perspective.

The stronger or more genuine way of being aperspectival would consist in adopting a 'view from nowhere', as Thomas Nagel's happy phrase has it, i.e. in a perspective detached from our human point of view by leaving 'even just human perspective behind'.<sup>6</sup> One way of adopting this latter perspective leads through the idea of universal reason:

Reason, if there is such a thing, can serve as a court of appeal not only against the received opinions and habits of our community but also against the peculiarities of our personal perspective. It is something each individual can find within himself, but at the same time it has universal authority. Reason provides, mysteriously, a way of distancing oneself from common opinion and received practices that is not a mere elevation of individuality – not a determination to express one's idiosyncratic self rather than go along with everyone else. Whoever appeals to reason purports to discover a source of authority within himself that is not merely personal, or societal, but

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<sup>4</sup> Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective" 600, 597.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Hume, *Treatise* 2.2.8.6, and Hume David, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: 1998) 5.41.

<sup>6</sup> Nagel T., *The View from Nowhere* (New York: 1986) 7.

universal – and that should also persuade others who are willing to listen to it.<sup>7</sup>

As I will argue in what follows, although for Hume moral philosophy belongs to the realm of reason, his concept of reason is certainly not of a faculty that allows us to leave our distinctively human perspective behind. On the contrary, reason is a faculty that belongs to human nature and finds its place only in the context of human conduct. Even if someone adopts the perspective of reason, for Hume it still remains *human* reason through and through. While describing the process of moral cognition Hume therefore incorporates aperspectival objectivity *as* impartiality – but not as genuinely aperspectival objectivity – assuming a ‘common point of view’ from which moral cognition is possible, and which is thought of as being independent of any particular human perspective. Morality for Hume concerns only human matters, and it has no reference outside the realm of human relations. Thus, impartiality is a human capacity, and morality cannot be understood outside the context of human nature – and particularly: it cannot be understood in terms of objectivity as being detached from the human point of view.

Moral philosophy for Hume is a descriptive and explanatory enterprise that is to be laid on the foundations of disinterested observation, devoid of the distorting influences of preconceptions or ideologies. This commitment was not at all common at that time, as moral philosophy was more often pursued from a normative-teleological perspective and with a commitment to religious considerations.<sup>8</sup> As I will argue below, the epistemic ideal of Humean moral philosophy is detached from these considerations, and it consists instead in what Daston and Galison call *truth-to-nature*. Accordingly, Humean moral philosophy aspires to what most eighteenth-century naturalists, like Linnaeus, Goethe, d’Alembert, Diderot, and others also aspired to, namely ‘to reveal a reality accessible only with difficulty’, an enterprise in which ‘[t]he eyes of both body and mind converged to discover a reality otherwise hidden to each alone’.<sup>9</sup> The product of this investigation is a ‘reasoned image’ of the epistemic object, which is human nature in Hume’s case.<sup>10</sup> In this process the object

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem 3–4.

<sup>8</sup> See Demeter T., “Enlarging the Bounds of Moral Philosophy: Newton’s Method and Hume’s Science of Man” in Biener Z. – Schliesser E. (eds.), *Newton and Empiricism* (Oxford: forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 58.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem 60, 66.

of knowledge gets represented in a generality that transcends the individual differences of entities that belong to the same type in order to reach a higher level of truth about them, by showing a fundamental unity concealed by the diversity of their various appearances and manifestations. In this way, the reasoned image of a given type, i.e. a plant, an animal, or human being, 'was truer to nature – and therefore more real – than any actual specimen'.<sup>11</sup>

In this vein, Hume's theory of human nature aims to find a similar unity in variety: it aims to explore the fundamental principles of human functioning and to explain by them characteristic human phenomena from cognition to society. His method of exploring human nature relies primarily on the observation of human behaviour and by analogical reasoning he reveals a handful of principles whose combination explains the variety of human phenomena.<sup>12</sup> Hume's method is thus in concert with 'the concrete practices of abstract reason as understood by Enlightenment naturalists: selecting, comparing, judging, generalizing. Allegiance to truth to nature required that the naturalist be steeped in but not enslaved to nature as it appeared.'<sup>13</sup>

As a consequence of being directed by different epistemic virtues, moral cognition and moral philosophy are largely independent practices for Hume. It is thus hardly surprising that Hume's moral philosophy has no direct influence on moral cognition, on the practice of making moral judgement. Moral philosophy is instead, at least partly but crucially, about exploring the causal mechanisms working in the background of moral cognition, and therefore normative ethics is not an integral part of Humean moral philosophy – while it does contain a theory of moral cognition. Correspondingly, the moral philosopher's task is quite distinct from that of the moralist whose project is continuous with everyday moral cognition: while the former is descriptive and explanatory, the latter is normative and evaluative.

As such, they belong to the realm of distinct faculties and serve different purposes. Moral philosophy is concerned with facts about human nature, and thus belongs to the realm of probable reasoning. Its aim is to produce

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<sup>11</sup> Ibidem 60.

<sup>12</sup> See Demeter T., "Hume's Experimental Method", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (2012), 577–599.

<sup>13</sup> Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 59. For a detailed discussion of the epistemic and methodological commitments of Enlightenment naturalists see Reill P.-H., *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: 2005).

satisfactory and useful theoretical knowledge gained from an accurate representation of human nature: it serves the purposes of understanding and policy-making from a third-person, observer perspective. Moral cognition belongs to the realm of imagination and moral sense, serving the purposes of our interaction and sociability, and as such it belongs to our second-person, participant perspective.<sup>14</sup>

*Moral Cognition or the Participants' Common Point of View*

For Hume moral cognition is founded on moral sentiments, i.e. secondary impressions that arise upon seeing or remembering some situation. Having moral impressions is thus dependent on having primary impressions of the senses, and also on having a faculty of the mind that provides the relevant secondary impressions, i.e. moral sense. It takes some reflection to reveal the difference between sense impressions and the impressions of the moral sense,<sup>15</sup> and therefore it is easy to mistake moral qualities for the qualities of the objects of sense perception, a mistake that consists in false beliefs about the status and origin of moral qualities. This gives ground to a false conception of morality that treats moral properties as observer-independent, objective properties of objects themselves. But as Hume emphasizes, morality does not consist in any 'matter of fact': vice and virtue 'are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind'.<sup>16</sup>

Another related feature of moral cognition, as Hume envisages it, is that it does not belong to the realm of reason because, in spite of all the efforts of moral philosophers, it is not founded on *a priori* demonstrable principles but on our moral sense:

That Faculty, by which we discern Truth and Falsehood, and that by which we perceive Vice and Virtue had long been confounded with each other, and

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<sup>14</sup> Here I diverge from e.g. Stephen Darwall's reading who argues that moral sentiment for Hume, and for Hutcheson too, is an 'observer phenomenon'. If Hume is interpreted this way then moral cognition and moral philosophy are prone to be conflated, and cannot be represented as distinct practices. See Darwall S., *British Moralists and the Internal Ought* (Cambridge: 1995) 285–286. More recently, Darwall lists Hume among those philosophers 'for whom evaluation of conduct and character does not take a fundamentally second-personal form'. See Darwall S., *The Second-Person Standpoint* (Cambridge, MA: 2006) 77.

<sup>15</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.3.11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem* 3.1.1.26.



all Morality was suppos'd to be built on eternal and immutable Relations which, to every intelligent Mind, were equally invariable as any Proposition concerning Quantity or Number. But a late Philosopher [Francis Hutcheson] has taught us, by the most convincing Arguments, that Morality is nothing in the abstract Nature of Things, but is entirely relative to the Sentiment or mental Taste of each particular Being; in the same Manner as the Distinctions of sweet and bitter, hot and cold arise from the particular Feeling of each Sense or Organ. Moral Perceptions therefore, ought not to be clas'd with the Operations of the Understanding, but with the Tastes or Sentiments.<sup>17</sup>

This frequent mistake of philosophers is not exclusively due to flawed reasoning, but also to a deceptive feature of moral impressions, namely that they are easily mistaken for ideas. Impressions are violent perceptions received by the mind: they are more forceful and vivacious than the ideas that derive as copies from them. With respect to ideas the mind enjoys a greater degree of autonomy because they can be easily compared and combined, i.e. manipulated by the imagination and reason. Moral cognition, however, is not founded on the *comparison* of ideas by these faculties, albeit we do have moral ideas as copies of moral impression. Instead, it is the faculty of moral sense that produces moral impressions whose important feature is that they are 'calm', not violent, and as such they can be easily mistaken for ideas.<sup>18</sup> This mistake can suggest that while making moral judgements we have to deal with ideas, not impressions, and thus moral cognition is easily subsumed falsely under the faculty of reason.

However natural this deceiving phenomenological appearance may be, moral cognition for Hume is to be grounded in a way of *sensing* and not in reasoning.<sup>19</sup> Moral sense is just a special source of perception and moral sensing is the process that provides us with the relevant impressions for moral ideas whose truth consists in their agreement with the impressions they copied. Reasoning is just the process of discovering truth and falsehood by comparing perceptions (ideas with ideas, and ideas with impressions), so the truth of moral ideas consists in their accurate representation of the impressions supplied by our moral sense. A moral belief (which is just a lively idea) can thus be as true or as false as the belief that the tomato in front of me is red. Given this competence of reason, it alone cannot supply moral judgements, nor can it produce

<sup>17</sup> Hume David, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: 2000) 232.

<sup>18</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 2.3.4.8, see also 3.1.2.1.

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent discussion of the 'moral sensing' interpretation of Hume's position see Cohon R., *Hume's Morality: Feeling and Fabrication* (Oxford: 2008).

motivation for action; but it does have a role to play in both processes by discovering truth or falsity. In order to have moral judgements and moral motivation we need something else: a moral sentiment, which is a feeling supplied by moral sense.

As a consequence of these two features of Hume's theory of moral cognition, i.e. its anti-objectivism and anti-rationalism, morality turns out to be an entirely human matter lacking any reference to the world as it is without moral agents, or to rational beings without the capacities relevant for moral sensing. Moral properties are part of the world's fabric because of the way we are, i.e. because of the particular constitution of our human nature. Morality, therefore, is not aperspectival in the strong sense: a Nagel-style suggestion of reaching objectivity by means of universal reason is not an option from Hume's stance. However, in the weaker sense, aperspectival objectivity *as* impartiality means a sober constraint on moral cognition that Hume's moral sensing view can, and indeed intends to, accommodate.

Moral sense is a peculiar faculty of the mind. It is constitutive and distinctive of human nature, meaning that lacking it questions even one's membership in the human race, and having this faculty distinguishes human beings from animals.<sup>20</sup> Although moral sense is constitutive of human nature, it is not uniform historically and geographically: it can be conditioned in various ways, depending on the circumstances in which a community lives. In ancient Rome, for example, courage was esteemed to a degree that in Hume's days would not count as virtue but extremity, but given the circumstances in which that society lived, i.e. 'the continual wars' the Romans were waging, their esteem for this character trait is understandable – even if it 'would sound a little oddly in other nations and other ages'.<sup>21</sup>

The two main guiding principles of moral sense are utility and agreeableness of character traits, and these properties are not distributed equally among the character traits in every age and everywhere. There is thus a flavour of *relativism* around Hume's theory of moral evaluation, even if the virtuous status of some of the character traits are indeed universal such as those belonging to natural abilities and the virtues of greatness

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<sup>20</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 8.40. For a discussion of the distinctive features of human beings in Hume see Beauchamp T.L., "Hume on the Non-Human Animal", *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 24 (1999) 322–335.

<sup>21</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 7.13.

of mind and of benevolence.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that some of the virtues are universally esteemed, which is consonant with Hume's view that some of the principles of human nature are stable and universal, but there are also contingent principles that emerge under the pressure of social and historical circumstances.<sup>23</sup> Correspondingly, there are virtues that emerge due to the necessity of living under social conditions, and these are labelled *artificial virtues*.

The functioning of moral sense is dependent on another faculty, namely sympathy. This faculty enables us to feel what others feel: upon seeing the behavioural signs of some passion or emotion, we infer the idea of that affection, and here sympathy enters: it 'converts' this idea into its corresponding impression:

When I see the *effects* of passion in the voice and gesture of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion, as is presently converted into the passion itself. In like manner, when I perceive the *causes* of any emotion, my mind is convey'd to the effects, and is actuated with a like emotion.<sup>24</sup>

This is the only faculty capable of transforming ideas into impressions, which is the reverse way of the standard process, ideas being normally copied from impressions. Furthermore, sympathy is a highly selective faculty of the mind, as it does not transform just any idea back into its corresponding impression: it only transforms those ideas that are relevant for moral evaluation, and it works more effectively with those standing in close relation to us.<sup>25</sup> By making us feel what those involved in a situation feel, sympathy helps us to judge how others are affected in the given situation. The role of sympathy in moral evaluation is to make us *feel* how a given character trait affects others, or the one who has it. If it brings pleasure or advantage, then we approve of it, if it does harm, then we disapprove. This is the basis of making moral judgement.

So the process of moral cognition goes roughly like this: upon seeing some situation we are supplied with sense impressions that are duly turned into ideas. Upon reflecting on this situation we do two things: first we trace back the behaviour of those involved to their causal origins, i.e. to motives and intentions as caused by, or consisting in, character traits. Secondly

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<sup>22</sup> See Cohon, *Hume's Morality* 163.

<sup>23</sup> See Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.4.1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem* 3.3.1.7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem* 3.3.1.14.

we take into consideration how those influenced are being affected by the traits responsible. The first aspect is a clear instance of causal reasoning: we take external behaviour to be a sign of character traits and from them we infer those traits.<sup>26</sup> Sympathy plays a crucial role in the second respect, and it can be deployed in imaginary as well as actual situations.<sup>27</sup> Therefore we can approve character traits whose beneficiary consequences are prevented by external circumstances, and we can approve good intentions even if they result in harmful consequences.

Up to this point Hume's account of moral cognition leaves ample space for making entirely subjective and idiosyncratic judgements, and thus it would make moral evaluation a personal and partial business. At this stage moral sense may seem universal, but the way it is conditioned is historically contingent, it has a propensity to favour those close to us, and it is grounded in subjective feeling. As it stands, it is a source of biased judgement not worthy of being treated as moral judgement. Yet there are processes balancing this bias that drive toward *impartiality*:

every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual *contradictions*, and arrive at a more *stable* judgment of things, we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view; and always in our thoughts, place ourselves in them.<sup>28</sup>

Adopting this perspective is not the product of reasoning, it is not reached through abstraction or generalization, but through taking an imaginary stance that emerges from leaving behind what is peculiar to our personal point of view.<sup>29</sup> Reached by the means of moral communication, this common point of view ensures the possibility of overcoming the biases of personal perspective. This process is similar to the judgement of understanding being transferred to the senses and thereby correcting

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of this kind of reasoning in common life and in philosophy see Demeter T., "Liberty, Necessity and the Foundations of Hume's 'Science of Man'", *History of the Human Sciences* 25/1 (2012) 15–31.

<sup>27</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 3.3.1.20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem* 3.3.1.15.

<sup>29</sup> This perspective on understanding others has proven to be an important inspiration for a position in contemporary research in philosophy and psychology. On Hume's significance for this position see e.g. Goldman A., *Simulating Minds* (Oxford: 2006) 17. See also Steuber K.R., *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass: 2006) 29–31.

impressions arising from a particular perspective.<sup>30</sup> The difference between the two processes is that transferring the judgements of understanding to the senses is purely a matter of our cognitive architecture, while adopting the common point of view consists in the correction of biased and situated sentiments that is possible only through social interaction, i.e. by acquaintance with the perspective of others.<sup>31</sup> This is a prerequisite for the possibility of consonant moral evaluations, which must be consonant to a considerable extent in order to be useful in future social interactions.

Moral sense for Hume is thus essentially social, and it is a source of impressions that is sensitive to situations only if viewed from the common point of view. From this perspective only the social effects of a character trait count for moral evaluation, i.e. the effects on those with whom the person possessing a given character trait interacts, the members of the community in which a given person lives:

when we consider, that every particular person's pleasure and interest being different, 'tis impossible men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgements, unless they chose some common point of view, from which they might survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them. Now, in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And 'tho such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counter-balance the latter even in practice, and are alone admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue and morality. They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend.<sup>32</sup>

Thus moral sentiment arises when we imagine a situation exclusively from the perspective of those involved, i.e. as detached from our partial perspective. Taking the common point of view serves the purpose of correcting our biased and situated sentiments and thereby facilitating reliable judgements for useful interaction.

Moral sense and imagination concur in this process: imagination supplies the common point of view and moral sense delivers an impression, typically a 'calm passion', that arises from this impartial point of view.

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<sup>30</sup> See e.g. Hume *Treatise*, 2.2.8.6, and Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 5.41.

<sup>31</sup> Although this process corrects our naturally biased sentiments, it cannot turn us into an ideal observer. See e.g. Bricke J., *Mind and Morality: An Examination of Hume's Moral Psychology* (Oxford: 1996) 157.

<sup>32</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 3.3.1.30.

As the impression is a 'calm passion' it is easily overridden by our stronger, and typically biased passions that arise from our personal point of view, and thus the process of correcting sentiments is not always successful: 'tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet they are sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools'.<sup>33</sup> Even if moral sentiments may sometimes be suppressed, they can motivate our social interactions, and practical reasoning,<sup>34</sup> because it is the insight we gain from the common, impartial point of view that provides reliable information on the causal background of people's behaviour.

Expressing judgements from the common point of view has its own peculiar vocabulary, and speaking the language of moral evaluation, along with its associated sentiments, helps us keep a distance from our personal biases, and stick to the common point of view:

When a man denominates another his *enemy*, his *rival*, his *antagonist*, his *adversary*, he is understood to speak the language of self-love, and to express sentiments, peculiar to himself, and arising from his particular circumstances and situation. But when he bestows on any man the epithets of *vicious* or *odious* or *depraved*, he then speaks another language, and expresses sentiments, in which he expects all his audience are to concur with him. He must here, therefore, depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to him with others.<sup>35</sup>

Moral language and moral discourse with others help us with correcting the impressions we gain from our particular point of view, and with adopting the common point of view with more success, by increasingly assimilating its standards. Moral discourse is therefore essential to the emergence of an impartial stance for moral evaluation:

without such a correction of appearances, both in internal and external sentiment, men could never think or talk steadily on any subject; while their fluctuating situations produce a continual variation on objects, and throw them into such different and contrary lights and positions. The more we converse with mankind, and the greater social intercourse we maintain, the more shall we be familiarized to these general preferences and distinctions, without which our conversation and discourse could scarcely be rendered intelligible to each other. Every man's interest is peculiar to himself, and the aversions and desires, which result from it, cannot be supposed to affect

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem 3.3.3.2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem 2.3.1.15–16.

<sup>35</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 9.6.

others in a like degree. General language, therefore, being formed for general use, must be moulded on some more general views, and must affix the epithets of praise or blame, in conformity to sentiments, which arise from the general interests of the community. And if these sentiments, in most men, be not so strong as those, which have a reference to private good; yet still they must make some distinction, even in persons the most depraved and selfish; and must attach the notion of good to a beneficent conduct, and of evil to the contrary. Sympathy, we shall allow, is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous; but for this very reason it is necessary for us, in our calm judgements and discourse concerning the characters of men, to neglect all these differences, and render our sentiments more public and social.<sup>36</sup>

Taking shape this way, the common point of view grants us the possibility of impartial moral evaluation. It is thus a perspective that satisfies the requirements of being aperspectival in the first sense characterized above, but it fails to be so in the second sense, as it is not a point of view detached from the determinations of human condition, which could be e.g. accessible for some universal reason. Moral cognition presupposes characteristically human capacities, membership in a community, and participation in social exchange. It is through social interaction that we come under pressure to adopt the common point of view, which is essentially defined by the perspectives of the person under moral scrutiny and those interacting with him. From Hume's perspective there is thus no need in moral cognition to be aperspectival in the strong sense, as moral cognition responds to the needs of social life, and to the peculiar standing of human beings in this world – and nothing beyond or above it.<sup>37</sup>

### *Moral Philosophy or Truth-to-Human-Nature*

The central epistemic virtue of moral philosophy differs from that of moral cognition, and impartiality in the sense of being devoid of the influence

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem 5.41–42.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Cohon characterizes this aspect of the common point of view very aptly: 'The common point of view is not a detached perspective, but the vantage point of the person being evaluated and the particular individuals with whom he has direct dealings. It gives us not a wide panorama, but an intimate glimpse. The common point of view is distant from us only in the sense that our presence there is imaginary rather than actual. It is general or common not in the sense of being a broad view, but rather in the sense that it is a view available to every reflective person and the same for all who adopt it'. Cohon, *Hume's Morality* 144.



of a particular perspective does not play a crucial role here. Almost on the contrary, the philosopher's personal judgement plays an indispensable role in exploring moral phenomena and his subjectivity cannot be excluded from the process of cognitive inquiry. As Hume puts it,

all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another.<sup>38</sup>

As Hume sees it, the philosopher's, and the lay person's, subjectivity enters into cognition in a way that is incompatible with a robust ideal of objectivity. Hume's position in this respect is similar to that of many prominent naturalists in the eighteenth century. As Daston and Galison point out, Linnaeus, for one, would have ridiculed the idea that scientific knowledge should be generated in an impersonal way, and that the most valuable pieces of knowledge are those that are independent of the personal traits of those producing knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, Hume shared Linnaeus's conviction that one should possess or develop certain character traits in order to elevate moral philosophy (i.e. the study of phenomena peculiar to moral beings *qua* moral beings) to the cognitive standing it should reach alongside natural philosophy. Hume's scattered methodological remarks are interwoven with more or less explicit prescriptions concerning the character one should develop in order to make a valuable contribution to the advancement of moral knowledge. For example, one should be wary not to be inclined to consult one's own fancy in moral philosophy, meaning that one should not rush into theorizing ungrounded in facts, which, as he complains, was characteristic of the classic authors of moral philosophy.<sup>40</sup> As he says elsewhere, this inclination is particularly strong if one has religious

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<sup>38</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 1.3.8.12.

<sup>39</sup> Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 59. On Linnaeus, see also Bernd Roling's contribution in this volume.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Greig J.Y.T. (ed.), *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1932) vol. I, 16 and 13.



motivations, which suggests that religious conviction is an obstacle to both natural and moral inquiry.<sup>41</sup>

The most important character trait of any student of human beings as moral beings is a capacity for keen observation, which was also generally posed as a requirement at that time for naturalists of any kind.<sup>42</sup> Observation for Hume does not consist exclusively in collecting minute details or in taking note of singular data not noticed by others. What really matters for the science of human nature, and nature in general too, is the capacity for *detecting resemblances* and *establishing analogies*. As Hume repeatedly emphasizes, it is impossible to reveal the ‘ultimate causes of our mental actions’, and we have to be content with ‘experience and analogy’ in explaining any act of the mind ‘by producing other instances, which are analogous to it, and other principles, which facilitate its operation’.<sup>43</sup> Finding analogies between different instances gives the chance of explaining causes and reducing them to ‘more general principles’.<sup>44</sup> This method of reasoning ensures the continuity of moral and natural philosophy, whose main common undertaking is ‘to reduce the principles, productive of natural phaenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation’.<sup>45</sup>

Hume’s commitment to the ideal of truth-to-nature is obvious in his method.<sup>46</sup> Moral phenomena are collected from history and observation, and then compared; if analogies and similarities are found, they are ascribed to principles of human nature that are also compared, grouped and resolved into more general ones. Once phenomena are analysed into their causal springs, the resulting principles can be construed for the purposes of explanation, thereby satisfying our curiosity and facilitating the improvement of society – without the possibility of ultimate knowledge of human essence. For Hume moral philosophy aspires to *revealing the underlying causes* of moral phenomena in order to explain the

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding* 10.38.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Hume, *Treatise* Introduction. See also Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 59–60.

<sup>43</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 1.1.7.11.

<sup>44</sup> Hume, *Treatise* Appendix 3.

<sup>45</sup> Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding* 4.12. On the details of the reductive aspect of Hume’s methodology see Schliesser E., “Copernican Revolutions Revisited in Adam Smith by way of David Hume”, *Revista Empressa Y Humanismo* 13 (2010) 213–248, and Demeter T., “Hume’s Copernican Turn” in Rahn T. – Neuber W. – Zittel C. (eds.), *Copernicus and His International Reception* (Leiden: forthcoming).

<sup>46</sup> See Demeter, “Hume’s Experimental Method”.

regularities of human functioning in terms of principles knowable from a human point of view: to reveal from observable phenomena explanatory principles that are themselves not observable, and to resolve them into more and more general ones.

For Hume, *analogical reasoning* is the key to most of our everyday and philosophical conclusions in empirical matters. Causal reasoning is partly but crucially founded on our capacity to recognize resemblances among different instances, and to extend our inferences based on previous observations to similar but unobserved instances. Thus the recognition of resemblances is at the heart of our reasoning concerning any matter of fact, and the limits of this kind of reasoning are exactly where our capacity to recognize resemblances ends: 'Without some degree of resemblance, as well as union, 'tis impossible there can be any reasoning: but as this resemblance admits of many different degrees, the reasoning becomes proportionably more or less firm and certain.'<sup>47</sup>

However, Hume is very much aware that recognising resemblances is a universally shared but *subjective* and *creative* act of the mind. Things are similar in an infinite number of ways, and only some of these similarities can be exploited from the human point of view with the hope of cognitive benefit.<sup>48</sup> As any thing may resemble any other in an infinite number of ways from among which only some can bear real explanatory power and provide insight into mechanisms underlying phenomena, only some resemblances can explain associative relations between ideas. Resemblances of cognitive relevance are therefore not passively detected, but they are actively produced by a faculty of the mind, namely memory: we remember past instances *as* resembling.<sup>49</sup> So the process of analogical reasoning relies on a subjective process that may have potentially idiosyncratic manifestations. Depending on the resemblances one recognizes among particular instances, one can end up with different and potentially conflicting conclusions concerning the causes of phenomena. Therefore, as Hume puts it:

No questions in philosophy are more difficult, than when a number of causes present themselves for the same phaenomenon, to determine which is the principal and predominant. There seldom is any very precise argument to

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<sup>47</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 1.3.13.25.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem* 1.1.5.3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem* 1.4.6.18.

fix our choice, and men must be contented to be guided by a kind of taste or fancy, arising from analogy, and a comparison of similar instances.<sup>50</sup>

Subjectivity is thus not a distorting influence on philosophical inquiry, but it has a positive heuristic role to play, which can be appealed to as a source of creativity and insight; at the same time, however, it constrains the objectivity of philosophical inquiry. Accordingly, impartiality in Hume's *philosophical* project is not a crucial epistemic value – quite unlike in the process of moral evaluation.

As he repeatedly explains, he aspires to provide an 'anatomy of the human mind', or as he sometimes puts it, a 'mental geography'.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the most persistent metaphor of Hume's entire *oeuvre* is the one with which he repeatedly characterizes his own role as an 'anatomist' of human nature. The idea of anatomy, if not the term, is already present in the "Letter to a Physician" in which Hume discusses the complications involved in bringing 'the Idea he comprehended in gross, nearer to him, so as to contemplate its minutest Parts, & keep it steddily in his Eye, so as to copy these Parts in Order'.<sup>52</sup> In the *Treatise* the metaphor returns to depict his enterprise as aspiring to 'an accurate anatomy of human nature'.<sup>53</sup> It works in the same way in his correspondence with Francis Hutcheson, and Hume relies on the same image in the first *Enquiry* while specifying the philosopher's task as consisting in the 'delineation of the distinct parts and powers of the mind'.<sup>54</sup> All in all, Hume uses this metaphor to emphasize that his project is descriptive and explanatory of moral phenomena in contrast with the normative and evaluative content of everyday morality and the moralists' pronouncements.

As the purpose of this inquiry is to produce a reliable map of the powers and faculties of the mind, the main epistemic virtue it may have is accuracy, due to which it can serve the purposes of policy making and facilitate knowledge production in other fields by revealing the cognitive means we possess. While this inquiry may not result in knowledge of some human essence, it can be 'accurate' and 'exact', and so it can satisfy our curiosity, and can be useful as well.<sup>55</sup> The science of man, like any other science 'is to teach us, how to control and regulate future events

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<sup>50</sup> Ibidem 3.2.3.4, n. 71.

<sup>51</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 1.14.

<sup>52</sup> Hume, *Letters* vol. I, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.6.23. See also 2.1.12.2, 3.3.6.6., Abstract. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 1.13. See also 1.14.

<sup>55</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Abstract 1.

by their causes', so that we can apply this knowledge in the interest of society. This knowledge is thus both instrumental and subjectively satisfactory, but it is not objective knowledge of the ultimate first principles of human nature.<sup>56</sup> Hume's project is consistent in this respect with that of many eighteenth-century naturalists like Linnaeus, Buffon, Cullen, and their followers both in its methodological commitments to observation, resemblance, comparison, and analogy in exploring the typical constitution of human nature, and the main epistemic virtue he associates with the outcomes of this kind of inquiry, namely truth-to-nature.<sup>57</sup>

It is clear from some of Hume's passages that his commitment to this epistemic virtue is to be contrasted with another one arising from the ideal of *a priori* and geometrical certainty – for example, the one which Hobbes observed in his civil philosophy,<sup>58</sup> or which Descartes advertised while searching for clear and distinct principles in order to construct theories in an intuitive and deductive way.<sup>59</sup> In the light of his subject's nature Hume finds this kind of method wanting in comparison with an experimental approach:

we can only expect success, by following the experimental method, and deducing general maxims from a comparison of particular instances. The other scientific method, where a general abstract principle is first established, and is afterwards branched out into a variety of inferences and conclusions, may be more perfect in itself, but suits less the imperfection of human nature, and is a common source of illusion and mistake in this as well as in other subjects. Men are now cured of their passion for hypotheses and systems in natural philosophy, and will hearken to no arguments but those which are derived from experience. It is full time they should attempt a like reformation in all moral disquisitions; and reject every system of ethics, however subtle or ingenious, which is not founded on fact and observation.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 7.29. and 1.9.

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. Daston – Galison, *Objectivity* 58–63; Reill, *Vitalizing Nature* 33–70; and Demeter T., "Post-Mechanical Explanation in the Natural and Moral Sciences: The Language of Nature and Human Nature in David Hume and William Cullen", *Jahrbuch für Europäische Wissenschaftskultur* 6 (2012) 65–85.

<sup>58</sup> See Hobbes T., "Six Lessons to the Savilian Professors of the Mathematics" in Molesworth W. (ed.), *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London: 1845), vol. VII, 181–356, 184.

<sup>59</sup> See Garber D., "Descartes and Method in 1637", in Garber D., *Descartes Embodied* (Cambridge: 2000) 33–51, here 37.

<sup>60</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 1.10.

For Hume, an abstract-demonstrative ideal of inquiry, which proceeds in an *a priori* manner from allegedly clear definitions or indubitable propositions, is of no use if one is in the business of charting the cognitive and moral constitution of human beings – and it is useless in natural philosophy, too.<sup>61</sup>

The bulk of contemporary inquiry into natural and moral phenomena was made sense of in a *religious* ideological framework.<sup>62</sup> Most contemporary Scottish moral philosophers, like Hutcheson, George Turnbull, and David Fordyce, advertise a religious *cum* teleological perspective in moral philosophy that promises to deliver knowledge of God and of the purpose of human beings, and aims to draw direct normative consequences concerning our duty.<sup>63</sup> Turnbull's central idea is this: regular and orderly appearances are due to the rule of laws in nature, and a physical explanation is given if an effect is subsumed under physical laws. Some of these laws are such that they produce 'good, perfection and beauty' in the material world,<sup>64</sup> and an effect is thus accounted for morally if it is shown to be produced by such laws. Explaining phenomena in this way is the *part* of natural philosophy that can be called moral philosophy. Nothing could be further away from Hume's position than this. For him, moral philosophy (and for that matter, natural philosophy, too), is an inner-worldly enterprise that has no reference to transcendence or even teleology,<sup>65</sup> and what is more, given our faculties we cannot hope for success if we direct our reasoning in the latter direction.<sup>66</sup>

Detached from this common transcendent orientation, it is easy to detect various traces of Hume's commitment to truth-to-nature as a central epistemic virtue of a 'science of man'. As he sees it, human beings belong to a natural historical category that can be studied in at least two ways, either as natural entities or as moral agents. These are two different ways of studying the same thing, but both are based on the same commitment, namely that

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<sup>61</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 4.10–13.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Cunningham A., "Getting the Game Right: Some Plain Words on the Identity and Invention of Science", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 19 (1988) 365–389.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. Hutcheson F., *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria* (Indianapolis: 2007) 24; Fordyce D., *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Indianapolis: 2003) 6; Turnbull G., *The Principles or Moral and Christian Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: 2005) vol. I, 10, 1:459.

<sup>64</sup> Turnbull, *The Principles*, vol. I, 50.

<sup>65</sup> This is obvious from Hume's letter to Hutcheson, 17/9/1739, *Letters* 1:33.

<sup>66</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 8.36. For a discussion see Demeter, "Liberty, Necessity and the Foundations of Hume's 'Science of Man'".

nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves. The case is the same with the fabric of the mind, as with that of the body. However the parts may differ in shape or size, their structure and composition are in general the same. There is a very remarkable resemblance, which preserves itself amidst all their variety.<sup>67</sup>

Methodologically speaking, this is a commitment to processing empirical material on the assumption of structural uniformity, with an attention to the causal contribution of structural elements, or in other words: the task is to identify the functional ingredients, i.e. *faculties* of human nature and their characteristic role in producing human action and internal functioning. This inquiry yields the principles of various faculties to be relied on in the explanations of moral philosophy, and therefore mapping these structurally fundamental principles of human nature is the proper aim of inquiry in the science of man.

There are other less stable principles playing an important role here:

I must distinguish [...] betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular; [...]. The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin.<sup>68</sup>

Some principles then are constitutive of human nature, but some others are just contingent on culture, history, or idiosyncrasies. So while the universal principles provide the general framework, on their basis various circumstances can give rise to the manifestation of particular ones. This explains why certain virtues, like courage as we have seen above, are evaluated differently in different historical periods, and also why a human-like creature without sympathy would count as a 'monster' not a 'man'.<sup>69</sup> It is thus apt to say that while there is a universal framework of human nature, its content is to a significant degree contingently conditioned. This amounts to saying that Hume's account of human nature has both universalist and particularist or even relativistic elements, and it sheds a sharp light on the methodological role historical study plays: it is

<sup>67</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 2.1.11.5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem* 1.4.4.1.

<sup>69</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 7.11–13 and 6.1–2.

only from a diachronic perspective, through the study of change, that the universal and contingent features of human nature can be separated.

The epistemic status of these principles of human nature is similar to those of natural philosophy: we are presented with moral phenomena, and the philosopher's task is to explain them by reference to the principles which produced them. These principles are not perceived directly, and we have no impressions of them. Instead, they are revealed by empirical reasoning and thus our knowledge of them is fallible: only the contents of the mind are given, while the principles applied in their explanation are theoretical constructs.

As some of these principles interact more closely, so they can be conveniently subsumed under various *faculties*, and Hume does talk freely, for example, about the universal principles of imagination, of sympathy, as well as of other faculties, their limits and imperfections. Talk about faculties is abundant throughout the text of the *Treatise*; sometimes they are referred to straightforwardly as the 'organs of the human mind'.<sup>70</sup> It is thus indeed natural to read Hume's work against the background of the metaphor of a qualitatively and vitalistically oriented *anatomy* of the human mind, which is built upon the foundations of its *physiology*, i.e. the study of the general laws of its normal functioning, that we can have access to its anatomy.<sup>71</sup> It is important to emphasise that talking about Hume's anatomy and physiology of mind is metaphorical: it signals the transmission of a language of natural phenomena to the moral domain. For Hume the mind is like an organised living body whose anatomy (the structure of its organs, i.e. faculties) is accessible only through its physiology (the study of its normal functioning). If viewed from this angle, the mind is a decentralised system of functional centres characterised by the specific activity they exert on sensations. These functional parts are linked together by various forms of interconnection, interaction, and mutual reciprocity. Through the reciprocal relations between various processes Hume charts the anatomy of the mind in which the interaction of various faculties adds up to a harmonious organic whole.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Hume, *Treatise* 1.1.4.1., 2.2.5.14. and 2.1.5.6.

<sup>71</sup> This reading of Hume is suggested in Demeter T., "The Anatomy and Physiology of Mind: Hume's Vitalistic Account" in Horstmannshoff H.F.J. – King H. – Zittel C. (eds.), *Blood, Sweat and Tears: The Changing Concepts of Physiology from Antiquity into Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston: 2012; Intersections 25) 217–240. A similar interpretation of Adam Smith is put forward by Packham C., "The Physiology of Political Economy: Vitalism and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63 (2002) 465–481.



*Conclusion: Separating Moral Cognition and Moral Philosophy*

Given his vision of what moral philosophy should aspire to, Hume quite unsurprisingly claims that moral philosophy can have only indirect normative consequences: knowing the anatomy of human nature can be useful for the moralist in the same sense as knowing the anatomy of human body can be useful for the painter:

We must have an exact knowledge of the parts, their situation and connexion, before we can design with any elegance or correctness. And thus the most abstract speculations concerning human nature, however cold and unentertaining, become subservient to *practical morality*; and may render this latter science more correct in its perceptions, and more perswasive in its exhortations.<sup>72</sup>

Knowledge of the anatomy of human nature allows for drawing conclusions about what is good or useful for this particular constitution, and this can result in normative considerations on how to act in various situations, or how to change the circumstances so as to ensure in a given situation the desirable action of those involved. Only knowledge of this anatomy can provide a firm foundation for putting forward normative claims concerning the correct course of behaviour to be followed under various circumstances.<sup>73</sup>

Hume's theory of moral cognition is a theory of *practice* that explains how moral cognition is facilitated by the interaction of various human faculties like reflection, reason, imagination, and sympathy. Through this exploration we are provided with a theory on the nature and limits of a human, innerworldly morality, whose constitutive epistemic virtue consists in its aperspectival aspirations – as far as our human constitution allows. This epistemic virtue is manifested in the evaluative practice of

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<sup>72</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 3.3.6.6.

<sup>73</sup> Compare Irwin T., *The Development of Ethics* (Oxford: 2008), vol. II, 564–565. Irwin has doubts about the tenability of Hume's separation of moral cognition and moral philosophy on the grounds that second-order talk about e.g. moral properties has inevitable influence on first-order moral practice. So moral philosophy must be directly relevant to moral cognition. Given Hume's naturalistic commitments to the description and explanation of moral phenomena I am more inclined to think that Hume offers what he thinks to be the best account of our actual moral practice. We may be mistaken about it, and can see ourselves as moral realists, but that is just a false account of what we actually do. And *vice versa*: Hume allows that his account, in this and other respects, turns out to be true, yet the phenomena themselves are untouched by false conclusions (see Hume, *Treatise* 1.2.5.19). Either way, moral practice is not directly influenced by second-order conclusions about moral phenomena.



those taking part in social interactions, and it is a virtue to observe from the *participant's perspective* under the pressure of the requirement of living under social conditions and the consequent need to contemplate actions as detached from our personal biases.

Moral philosophy for Hume is a *theoretical* enterprise that aims to describe the processes responsible for the practice of moral evaluation, and explain them as part of a comprehensive account of human capacities and their functioning. The main epistemic virtue of this enterprise is truth-to-nature, which directs the investigation that reveals the specific and constitutive features of human nature from its various and impure manifestations in history and common life. This enterprise is conducted from the *observer's perspective* and relies on the subjective capacities of the observer, especially on his keen observation and capacity to reveal resemblances and establish explanatory analogies through them. The aim is not to produce a body of objective knowledge detached from personal perspectives – that is not even an attainable ideal for philosophical knowledge, as it is judged by taste.

Now, it seems obvious that moral cognition is relevant for moral philosophy only as part of its *explanandum*. The end product of moral cognition is motivation, and as such it falls into a different category than the theoretical understanding aimed at by moral philosophy. Moral cognition has direct practical relevance, but no theoretical output. The question is more intriguing in the reverse way: can moral philosophy influence moral evaluation? According to Hume's official position, moral philosophy is a theoretical enterprise, and as such it has only indirect relevance for moral practice: it supplies a theory of moral practice but does not directly change it. However, relying on the anatomy of human nature provided by the moral philosopher, a *moralist* can only put forward his precepts and evaluative considerations with the assistance of the knowledge provided by the moral philosopher – just like a painter needs the anatomist's knowledge for his art.

This suggests that moral philosophy can enter moral cognition through the moralists' work, professional or otherwise, i.e. via discussing moral precepts and evaluations, whose discussion can be more or less founded on insights gained from (proper, i.e. experimental, true-to-nature) moral philosophy. As we have seen above, the moral discourse one enters as a moralist is instrumental in refining and correcting impressions we gain from our particular points of view, facilitates taking others into due consideration, and thus it is indispensable for achieving aperspectival, i.e. impartial, moral judgement aimed at the process of moral cognition.

Given the fact that accepting the conclusions of moral philosophy depends on subjective factors such as taste and resemblances, the contribution of moral philosophy to aperspectival evaluation is limited. Pursuing truth-to-nature in matters of human nature does not produce an aperspectival stance for moral cognition, but through moral discourse it enriches and refines the common point of view from which moral sentiments should arise. It is through the common point of view that the conclusions of philosophical reasoning can be transferred to moral sense. Therefore, if viewed from the angle of moral cognition, the main import of moral philosophy consists in its contribution to the delicacy of moral taste.

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BETWEEN IMPARTIALITY AND PARRHESIA:  
ADAM SMITH'S FIGURE OF THE IMPARTIAL SPECTATOR

Bastian Ronge

Adam Smith was probably one of the first philosophers to introduce the concept of impartiality into the realm of moral philosophy.<sup>1</sup> In his book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS), published in 1759, Smith develops the idea of an impartial spectator, one of his most compelling concepts.<sup>2</sup> But who or what embodies this impartial spectator? There is broad agreement within Smith scholarship that the impartial spectator stands for an internalized authority that helps us to direct our own moral behaviour and to deliver accurate moral judgements. His assistance is indispensable, particularly when it comes to evaluating our own moral behaviour, since in this case our judgments are usually biased by the 'natural misrepresentations of self-love'.<sup>3</sup> The only way to overcome these 'delusions of self-love' is to stand aloof from ourselves and to observe our conduct with the eyes of an impartial spectator.<sup>4</sup> But from what viewpoint does the impartial spectator look at us?

This question has provoked an ongoing debate in Smith scholarship. On the one hand, there are scholars who maintain that the impartial spectator holds a viewpoint within society. Since he is nothing other than the outcome of the moral evaluations that we experience through our lifetime, he represents the norms and conventions of our society.<sup>5</sup> On the

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<sup>1</sup> For Smith moral philosophy is not about how people *should* behave, but rather involves explaining why people behave as they do. It is embedded in the overall project of the (Scottish) Enlightenment, i.e. the foundation of a new 'science of man' (David Hume), and responds, therefore, to what is in the first instance an anthropological interest. Cf. Jones P., *The Science of Man in the Scottish Enlightenment: Hume, Reid and Their Contemporaries* (Edinburgh: 1989); Fox C., *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains* (Berkeley: 1995).

<sup>2</sup> As the editors of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, write in their Introduction: 'Sympathy and the impartial spectator, as Smith interprets them, are the truly original features of his theory.' Raphael D.D. – Macfie A.L., "Introduction", in Smith Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford: 1976) 7.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, TMS 137.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, TMS 159.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Campbell T., *Adam Smith's Science of Morals* (London: 1971) 145; Raphael D.D. *The Impartial Spectator. Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: 2007) 43f.

other hand, there are scholars who prefer to read the impartial spectator in line with Roderick Firth's concept of the 'ideal observer'.<sup>6</sup> In order to save Smith's moral philosophy from collapsing into mere relativism, they read the impartial spectator as someone 'who rises above particular viewpoints' and represents a transcendental viewpoint beyond society.<sup>7</sup>

In the following, I will suggest an interpretation of the impartial spectator that could resolve this debate. I will argue that Smith's impartial spectator is a revenant of a well-known figure of ancient philosophy. Like the ancient parrhesiast, the impartial spectator stands for an authority that we need greatly in order to 'pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion'.<sup>8</sup> However, the impartial spectator seems to have a different character to that of the parrhesiast. While the latter is usually identified as a close friend, Adam Smith's impartial spectator stands for the opposite, i.e. the figure of the stranger. The impartial spectator, therefore, possesses a particular type of objectivity, since the stranger holds a viewpoint which is *within and beyond* society at the same time. My argument will be developed in three steps. I will start with a short discussion of Adam Smith's theory of sympathy. Then, I will proceed with a general account of his idea of the impartial spectator. In the final step, I would like to show why Smith's impartial spectator could be understood as a revenant of the ancient figure of the parrhesiast.

### *The Social Dimension of Adam Smith's Theory of Sympathy*

Smith's notion of sympathy depicts a basic principle in human nature, namely the principle that makes us imitate the feelings of our fellow men. For example: when we see someone crying, the principle of sympathy motivates us to put ourselves in his situation and to feel a similar feeling

<sup>6</sup> Firth R., "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 12 (1952) 317–345.

<sup>7</sup> Daston L., "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective", *Social Studies of Science* 22, 4 (1992) 597–618; 605; Haakonssen K., "Introduction: The Coherence of Smith's Thought", in Haakonssen K. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith* (Cambridge – New York: 2006) 1–21; here 13.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *TMS* 158.

of sadness.<sup>9</sup> However, the principle of sympathy is not restricted to negative feelings like sadness or sorrow, but covers all sorts of emotions.<sup>10</sup>

Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.<sup>11</sup>

Since our sympathetic feelings are evoked by imagination, they are usually weaker in degree than the original feelings that the person principally concerned feels.<sup>12</sup>

Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes itself upon them; and though it does not hinder them from conceiving a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer, hinders them from conceiving any thing that approaches to the same degree of violence.<sup>13</sup>

Due to this irreducible gap of intensity between the sympathetic and the original feelings, both the spectator and the person principally concerned must make some effort to achieve emotional correspondence, i.e. the

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<sup>9</sup> The principle of sympathy is cultivated by a certain way of living (reading sentimental novels, going to the theatre etc.), but is primarily founded in the human body (cf. Smith, *TMS* 9f.). Smith adopts the notion of sympathy from his friend David Hume, who himself knows the concept probably from his readings in the Physiology Library of Glasgow University (cf. Broadie A., "Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator", in Haakonssen K. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith* (Cambridge – New York: 2006) 158–188; here 161f. For the medical background to the concept of sympathy, cf. Haakonssen L., *Medicine and Morals in the Enlightenment: John Gregory, Thomas Percival and Benjamin Rush* (Amsterdam: 1997).

<sup>10</sup> The so-called Adam Smith Problem, i.e. the presumption of a contradiction between the 'egoistic' *Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations* and the 'altruistic' *Theory of Moral Sentiments* neglects this broad notion of sympathy. Hence, Macfie and Raphael are absolutely right when they write in their Introduction to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "The so-called 'Adam Smith problem' was a pseudo-problem based on ignorance and misunderstanding." (Raphael – Macfie, "Introduction" 20). For the legacy of Adam Smith in general and the Adam Smith Problem in particular, see Haakonssen K. – Winch D., "The Legacy of Adam Smith", in Haakonssen K. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith* (Cambridge – New York: 2006) 366–394.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *TMS* 10.

<sup>12</sup> There are only a few exceptions to the rule, as, for example, our pity for the dead (cf. Smith, *TMS* 12f.). This irregular sympathy is for Smith 'the foundation of testamentary succession.' Cf. Smith Adam, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: 1978) 467.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *TMS* 21f.

state of sympathy.<sup>14</sup> While the spectator has to brace all his imaginative powers to evoke lively fellow feelings, the person principally concerned has to lower his original passion 'to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him'.<sup>15</sup>

But how does the latter reduce his emotions? Smith gives a quite surprising answer: in the same way in which the spectator evokes his sympathetic fellow feelings.

In order to produce this concord, as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators. [...] As their sympathy makes them look at it [...] with his eyes, so his sympathy makes him look at it [...] with theirs, especially when in their presence and acting under their observation: and as the reflected passion, which he thus conceives, is much weaker than the original one, it necessarily abates the violence of what he felt before he came into their presence, before he began to recollect in what manner they would be affected by it, and to view his situation in this candid and impartial light.<sup>16</sup>

In other words: to lower our immediate emotions we have to imitate the sympathetic feeling of the spectator, that is, we have to copy a copy of our own original feelings.

One of the most compelling points of this sympathetic interaction is its social dimension. If the spectator is a close friend, his sympathetic feelings will be aroused to a relatively high degree, while a stranger will naturally have the least fellow feeling with us:

We expect less sympathy from a common acquaintance than from a friend: we cannot open to the former all those little circumstances which we can unfold to the latter: we assume, therefore, more tranquillity before him, and endeavour to fix our thoughts upon those general outlines of our situation which he is willing to consider. We expect still less sympathy from an assembly of strangers, and we assume, therefore, still more tranquillity before them, and always endeavour to bring down our passion to that pitch, which the particular company we are in may be expected to go along to. Nor

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<sup>14</sup> Smith's use of the notion sympathy is far from being clear and unequivocal, since it has at least two different meanings (the harmony of feelings and the natural capability to evoke fellow-feelings). His contemporaries complained about this prevarication. Cf. Stewart D., "Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith", in Smith Adam, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (Oxford: 1980) 269–351, 291, which incidentally caricatures Smith's own ideal of the 'perspicuity of style' (Smith Adam, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* [Oxford: 1983] 3).

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *TMS* 22.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *TMS* 22.



is this only an assumed appearance: for if we are at all masters of ourselves, the presence of a mere acquaintance will really compose us, still more than that of a friend; and that of an assembly of strangers still more than that of an acquaintance.<sup>17</sup>

This social or sociological aspect of Smith's theory of sympathy is often neglected in the Adam Smith scholarship. This is unfortunate, since it plays an important role in understanding his concept of the impartial spectator.

### *Adam Smith's Concept of the Impartial Spectator*

Sympathetic interaction is thus a process of emotional modulation as well as of moral evaluation. This is because every spectator will naturally approve of the conduct of the person principally concerned, if the latter has succeeded in lowering his original feelings to a pitch to which the former can accede. How could we disapprove of someone's behaviour, when we feel almost the same as them? If there is emotional correspondence between us and another person, the evidence of our own emotions will constrain us to accept and approve of their conduct.<sup>18</sup>

But how do we evaluate the moral quality of our own moral behaviour? According to Smith, this takes place in the very same way:

The principle by which we naturally either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, seems to be altogether the same with that by which we exercise the like judgments concerning the conduct of other people.<sup>19</sup>

In other words: when people around us show similar feelings to the way we feel, we conclude that they agree with our conduct. If the people around us laugh as loud as we do, we feel sure that they accept our witty joke. If they cry as much as we cry, they obviously approve of our sorrow or grief. The emotional reactions of our social environment display to us the moral quality of our actions. Our fellow men serve as a living mirror; their emotional reactions towards us reveal the moral quality of our action in a very direct and instructive way:

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, *TMS* 23.

<sup>18</sup> Analogously, our disapproval is stronger the bigger the difference is between our feelings and the feelings of the person principally concerned.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *TMS* 109.

Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. [...] Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and it is here that he first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind.<sup>20</sup>

However, as a matter of fact, quite often the judgements of others may be unfair and unjust. Sometimes, the people around us just do not know why we are acting as we do. They lack information about our character or our situation, so that their sympathetic feelings must fall short of our own feelings. Sometimes, the original motives are reversed by the unpredictable run of events. Suddenly, our behaviour yields harmful effects, although it was meant to be benevolent.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, our social environment gauges our actions to be improper and incorrect, while we think that they are quite adequate and agreeable. In these situations, we appeal against the judgements of our fellow men and hand our case over to a higher authority, namely to the authority of the impartial spectator:<sup>22</sup>

But though man has [...] been rendered the immediate judge of mankind, he has been rendered so only in the first instance; and an appeal lies from his

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, *TMS* 110.

<sup>21</sup> Adam Smith is a real admirer of 'paradoxes of unintended consequences' (Max Weber) – whether they occur in the context of moral judgement as here, or in the course of economic actions (e.g. actions intended egoistically which bring about beneficial effects for the society as if they were monitored by an invisible hand), in the field of politics (e.g. the decline of feudalism) or in the progress of history as a whole (e.g. the unintended discovery of America). There are numerous examples in Smith that reveal his passion for unsettling faith in the straightforwardness of human will and the controllability of the course of events.

<sup>22</sup> This passage reveals the juridical background of Smith's notion of impartiality. Although there are no entrances for 'impartial' or 'impartiality' in Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1756, the words occur in several other entries, which are all more or less connected to the semantic field of jurisprudence. Cf. the following entries: 'to challenge' (in Law: to object to the impartiality of someone); 'equitable' (loving justice; candid; impartial); 'evenness' (impartiality; equal respect); 'imprejudicate' (unprejudiced; not prepossessed; impartial). In general one might say that 'impartial' or 'impartiality' had not derived semantic independence at that time and that they are more or less covered by 'indifferent' and 'indifferency', cf. the entries for 'indifferency' (impartiality) and 'indifferent' (impartial; disinterested). That might be the reason why Smith sometimes uses the notion 'indifferent spectator' instead of 'impartial spectator' without any words of explanation (cf. Smith, *TMS* 39, 151, 157, 158, 238).

sentence to a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct.<sup>23</sup>

But this act of emancipation is far from being unproblematic. Given the strength of our self-love and its delusive powers, it is more than likely that the judgements of the impartial spectator are not as impartial as supposed. Smith tries to tackle this problem by describing the impartial spectator as a heterogeneous authority in us:

When I endeavour to examine my own conduct [...] it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself [...] into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion. The first is the judge; the second the person judged of.<sup>24</sup>

I am not going to examine whether this solution to the problem is plausible or not. The question at stake will be: who is this authority in my breast? Is it the mere representation of society's norms and conventions, or is it some sort of non-empirical, transcendental authority? As I mentioned at the beginning, this question causes an ongoing debate in the scholarship. There are good reasons for this, since Smith's impartial spectator actually contains both aspects: without a doubt he is the outcome of the social evaluations that we experience with our fellow citizens. But the impartial spectator is also conceptualized as a way out of the judgements of our social environment. In the following I am going to present an interpretation of the impartial spectator that combines both aspects without being contradictory.

*The Impartial Spectator as a Stranger and as  
Revenant of the Ancient Parrhesiast*

For the proponents of the Enlightenment the figure of the stranger is of particular interest, since his point of view allows a critical, almost

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<sup>23</sup> Smith, *TMS* 130.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *TMS* 113.

ethnological approach to the current norms and values of society. Slipping into the role of a stranger is a very effective strategy by which to enlighten the society. The most famous example of this is probably Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, published in 1721, in which the author presents the supposedly authentic letters of two Persians, writing about their experiences in French society:

The Persians who wrote those letters lodged at my house, and we spent our time together: they looked upon me as a man belonging to another world, and so they concealed nothing from me. Indeed, people so far from home could hardly be said to have secrets. They showed me most of their letters, and I copied them. [...] One thing has often astonished me, and that is, that these Persians seemed often to have as intimate an acquaintance as I myself with the manners and customs of our nation, an acquaintance extending to the most minute particulars and not unpossessed of many points which have escaped the observation of more than one German traveller in France. This I attribute to the long stay which they made, without taking it into consideration how much easier it is for an Asiatic to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the French in one year, than it would be for a Frenchman to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the Asiatics in four, the former being as communicative as the latter are reserved.<sup>25</sup>

Another example is the very popular and widely read publication, *The Spectator*, by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.<sup>26</sup> The fictive narrator of this moral journal, Mr. Spectator, is a stranger as well, since he travelled a lot 'into foreign countries' in search of 'any thing new or strange to be seen'.<sup>27</sup> After his return to London, he upholds this stranger perspective in order to have an impartial and independent outlook on his fellow citizens:

Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species, by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical

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<sup>25</sup> Montesquieu, "Introduction to the First French Edition", in Montesquieu, *The Complete Works* (London, T. Evans: 1777), vol. III, 191–485, 196 f.

<sup>26</sup> Since it belonged to the required reading in school, Smith would have known *The Spectator* very well. Cf. Phillipson N., *Adam Smith. An Enlightened Life* (New Haven – London: 2010) 19; Moore T.O., *The Enlightened Curriculum: Liberal Education in Eighteenth Century British Schools* (Edinburgh: 1999) 97–116. For the significance of *The Spectator* in general, cf. Altick R.D., *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900* (Chicago: 1957) 46.

<sup>27</sup> Addison Joseph, "Mr Spectator", in Lobban J.H. (ed.), *Selections from The Spectator* (Cambridge: 1961) 1–5, here 2.

part in life. [...] I never espoused any party with violence, and am resolved to observe a strict neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper.<sup>28</sup>

Adam Smith's impartial spectator seems to be a further example of this popular idea of the stranger's objectivity. In a very telling letter to his friend Gilbert Elliot, dated 10 October 1759, Smith tries to tackle 'the objection which you made to a Part of my system' – presumably the restriction of moral judgements to public opinion – by sketching out his idea of the impartial spectator once again.<sup>29</sup> Most of it sounds quite familiar to the reader of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, but there is also some new detail in his explanation. Smith depicts the impartial spectator as someone who is of 'no particular relation, either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct' and who considers our actions, therefore, 'with the same indifference with which we regard that of other people':<sup>30</sup>

When we first come into the world, being desirous [sic] to please those we live with, we are accustomed to Consider what behaviour is likely to be agreeable to every person we converse with, to our parents, to our masters, to our companions. We address ourselves to individuals, and for some time fondly pursue the impossible and absurd project of rendering ourselves universally agreeable, and of gaining the good will and approbation of every body. We soon Learn, however, from experience, that this universal approbation is altogether unattainable. As soon as we come to have more important interests to manage, we find, that by pleasing one man we almost certainly disoblige another, and that by humouring an individual, we may often irritate a whole people. The fairest and most equitable conduct must frequently obstruct the interests or thwart the inclinations of particular persons, who will seldome have candour en enough to enter into the propriety of our motives, or to see that our conduct, how disagreeable soever to them, is perfectly suitable to our situation. We soon learn, therefore, to sett up in our own minds a judge between ourselves and those we live with. We Conceive

<sup>28</sup> Addison, "Mr Spectator" 3 f.

<sup>29</sup> Smith Adam, *The Correspondence of Adam Smith* (Oxford: 1976) 48. Since the original letter is not recorded, one only can infer Elliot's objection. D.D. Raphael writes about this: 'From the evidence of this letter and its enclosure, we can infer the general drift of Elliot's objection: if moral judgement on our own actions were a reflection of the approval and disapproval of society, then it would be impossible for a man to form a moral judgement which he knows is contrary to popular opinion. The second and longer of the amendments which Smith enclosed with this letter answers the objection by developing Smith's theory of the impartial spectator' (ibidem n. 1).

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Correspondence* 54.

ourselves as acting in the presence of a person quite candid and equitable, of one who has no particular relation, either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct; who is neither father, nor Brother, nor friend, either to them, or to us; but is merely a man in general, an impartial Spectator who considers our conduct with the same indifference with which we regard that of other people.<sup>31</sup>

Even if Smith does not use the word 'stranger' here, he seems to have this term in mind, since the stranger is the only figure that matches perfectly well with the given description. Since the stranger has the same social distance to all members of society, he really has no particular relation, either to ourselves or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct, and he regards our actions with the same indifference with which we regard that of other people. There are several other, more systematic, arguments that support this interpretation.

First of all, this interpretation reveals the interrelation between Smith's two 'truly original features', because reading the impartial spectator as a stranger means to read him in relation to the theory of sympathy.<sup>32</sup> Since the stranger has naturally the least sympathetic feeling for us, sympathetic interaction with him will lead to the maximal reduction of our original affectivity, in other words, to a very high level of self-command. With that, the second argument is already indicated.

It is well known that Smith was deeply influenced by Stoic philosophy.<sup>33</sup> What made the strongest impression on him was the Stoics' philosophical struggle for perfect self-command. Several passages in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* reveal his deep admiration:

Such was the philosophy of the stoics. A philosophy which affords the noblest lessons of magnanimity, is the best school of heroes and patriots, and to the greater part of whose precepts there can be no other objection, except that honourable one, that they teach us to aim at a perfection altogether beyond the reach of human nature.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Correspondence* 54.

<sup>32</sup> Raphael – Macfie, "Introduction" 7.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Waszek N., "Two Concepts of Morality: A Distinction of Adam Smith's Ethics and its Stoic Origin", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1984) 591–606; Vivenza G., *Adam Smith and the Classics: The Classical Heritage in Adam Smith's Thought* (Oxford: 2001); Montes L., *Adam Smith in Context: A Critical Reassessment of Some Central Components of his Thought* (Basingstoke: 2004); Montes L., "Adam Smith as an Eclectic Stoic", in Brown V. (ed.), *The Adam Smith Review* 4 (London – New York: 2008) 30–56.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *TMS* 60. Cf.: "The spirit and manhood of their doctrines make a wonderful contrast with the desponding, plaintive, and whining tone of some modern systems' (Smith, *TMS* 283).

However, Smith considers the stoic demand that apathy be the necessary foundation of self-control to be profoundly mistaken. For him, being apathetic is not a virtue at all, since such an affective insensibility prevents us from sympathizing with our fellow men and, therefore, from delivering moral judgements and from behaving in accordance with the expectations of our social environment. By conceptualizing the impartial spectator as a stranger, Smith succeeds in achieving Stoic-like self-command without its highly doubtful foundation.<sup>35</sup>

Last but not least, the interpretation of the impartial spectator as a stranger shows a way out of the perpetual argument as to whether he is some sort of meta-empirical, transcendental authority or the mere representation of current social norms. As a matter of fact, the stranger possesses a particular type of objectivity, as Georg Simmel stated in his famous essay *The Stranger*:

Because he [the stranger, B.R.] is not bound by roots to the particular constituents, and partisan disposition of the group, he confronts all of these with a distinctly 'objective' attitude, an attitude that does not signify mere detachment and nonparticipation, but is a distinct structure composed of remoteness and nearness, indifference and involvement. [...] Objectivity is by no means nonparticipation, a condition that is altogether outside the distinction between subjective and objective orientations. It is rather a positive and definite kind of participation [...].<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 'By the perfect apathy which it prescribes to us, by endeavouring, not merely to moderate, but to eradicate all our private, partial, and selfish affections, by suffering us to feel for whatever can befall ourselves, our friends, our country, not even the sympathetic and reduced passions of the impartial spectator, it endeavours to render us altogether indifferent and unconcerned in the success or miscarriage of every thing which Nature has prescribed to us as the proper business and occupation of our lives' (Smith, *TMS* 292f.; see also: Smith, *TMS* 143). Smith's overall purpose seems to be the harmonization of ancient Stoicism with the eighteenth century culture of sensibility, resulting in the creation of a *Sensitive Stoicism*. This compelling attempt is widely overlooked in Smith scholarship, since most of the philosophical studies are not interested in the culture of sensibility at all. Exceptions to the rule are Dwyer J., *The Age of the Passions. An Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton: 1998) and Dwyer J., "Adam Smith in the Scottish Enlightenment", in Mizuta H. (ed.), *Adam Smith: International Perspectives* (Basingstoke – Hampshire: 1993) 141–161.

<sup>36</sup> Simmel G., "On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings", in Levine D.N. (ed.), *The Heritage of Sociology* (Chicago: 1971) 145 f. Several sociologists have taken up this line of argumentation, cf. Park R.E., "Human Migration and the Marginal Man", in Park R.E. (ed.), *Race and Culture* (New York: 1964) 345–356; Wood M.M., *The Stranger: A Study in Social Relationships* (New York: 1934); Schütz A., "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology", *American Journal of Sociology* 49 (1944) 499–507.



The stranger holds a particular point of view: on the one hand, he is bound to the ongoing social experiences in society; on the other hand, he can evaluate them against an alternative social background. He holds a point of view that is embedded in society, but is nevertheless open to looking critically beyond current norms and conventions. In other words: the stranger represents a moral meta-authority within society.<sup>37</sup>

According to this interpretation, Adam Smith's impartial spectator can be regarded as the revenant of a very old philosophical figure, namely the figure of the parrhesiast. Parrhesia, that is, free speech, is a very popular theme in ancient philosophy.<sup>38</sup> The philosophers of the late Hellenistic period, in particular, reflect upon parrhesia and the parrhesiast, who is a person that speaks frankly and fearlessly and guarantees the truth of his words by his personal integrity. The philosophical interest in the parrhesiast results from his importance for our *care of the self*, as Michel Foucault pointed out in his late lectures.<sup>39</sup> Without his assistance, we could never see through the delusions of self-love, and we would never realize the truth about ourselves.

In this respect, there is a striking resemblance between the parrhesiast and Smith's impartial spectator. Both concepts address the same problem, namely the delusory powers of self-love. This resemblance is far from being pure coincidence. Since Smith borrows his idea of self-love explicitly from the stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, he must have known the stoic solution to its problematic dimensions as well.<sup>40</sup> However, there is also an impor-

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<sup>37</sup> This singular epistemic status is only accorded to the stranger in the strict sense of the word, i.e. a person who comes from another society. Several scholars have rightly hinted at the fact that eighteenth century commercial society becomes more and more a society of strangers and that the importance of traditional boundaries (family, relatives, neighbours) becomes minor. Cf. Hill L., "Social Distance and the New Strangership in Adam Smith", *The Adam Smith Review* 6 (2011) 111–128; Ignatieff M., *The Needs of Strangers* (London: 1994); Mizuta H., "Moral Philosophy and Civil Society", in Skinner A.S. – Wilson T. (eds.), *Essays on Adam Smith* (Oxford: 1975) 14–131. The latter has pointed out that Smith's impartial spectator is the figuration of a stranger (cf. *ibid.* 122), although not in the strict sense as it is proposed here.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Hadot I., "The Spiritual Guide", in Armstrong A.H. (ed.), *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. Vol. 15 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: 1986) 436–459; Rabbow P., *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (Munich: 1954) 267 f., 287 f.; Konstan D. et al., "Introduction" in *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism* (Atlanta: 2007) 1–24.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Foucault M., *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (New York: 2005); Foucault M., *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983* (New York: 2010); Foucault M., *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984* (New York: 2011).

<sup>40</sup> 'According to Zeno, the founder of the Stoical doctrine, every animal was by nature recommended to its own care, and was endowed with the principle of self-love, that it



tant difference between the parrhesiast and the impartial spectator. Amongst ancient philosophers like Seneca, Cicero or Epicurus there is a general agreement that the role of the parrhesiast should be taken by a close friend, since he knows us best. Seneca, for example, gives the following advice in his treatise *On Anger*:

Let us beg all our best friends to use to the utmost such liberty toward us, especially when we are least able to bear it, and let there be no approval of our anger. While we are sane, while we are ourselves, let us ask help against an evil that is powerful and oft indulged by us.<sup>41</sup>

Smith rejects this identification of the parrhesiast because he thinks that our best friend will have much too much sympathy for us. If we really want to get rid of the delusions of self-love, we have to communicate with somebody who has the lowest sympathy for us; that is, we have to ask the opinion of a stranger. In other words: Smith's concept of the impartial spectator is a fascinating hybrid. Smith brings a popular insight of the eighteenth century enlightenment – the critical objectivity of the stranger – together with the very old philosophical idea that we need some authority to avoid the 'natural misrepresentations of self-love'.<sup>42</sup> In this way, Smith not only solves one major problem of the ancient discourse of the parrhesiast – how to distinguish between the friend and the mere flatterer<sup>43</sup> – but also creates a very compelling ideal of ethical objectivity. His impartial spectator is not the 'first conceptual home' of aperspectival objectivity, as Lorraine Daston has maintained, but is rather a revenant of the ancient parrhesiast, since he shares the latter's defining function, but has changed his character from a friend to a stranger.<sup>44</sup>

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might endeavour to preserve, not only its existence, but all the different parts of its nature, in the best and most perfect state of which they were capable' (Smith, *TMS* 272).

<sup>41</sup> Seneca, *De Ira* III, 13.4. 'Rogemus amicissimum quemque ut tunc maxime libertate adversus nos utatur cum minime illam pati poterimus, nec assentiat irae nostrae; contra potens malum et apud nos gratiosum, dum consipimus, dum nostri sumus, advocemus'. Compare also Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 38.1 and the very instructive elaborations of Hadot I., *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin: 1969) 170.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *TMS* 137.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* (*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*), in *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. I (London: 1986) 264–398; Galenus, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* (Columbus: 1963) 32 f.

<sup>44</sup> Daston L., "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective", *Social Studies of Science* 22 (1992) 597–618, here 605.

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## 7. IMPARTIALITY AND THE ART OF OBSERVATION



IMPARTIALITY IN THE MATRIX OF TAXONOMY:  
CARL VON LINNÉ AND FOLKLORE<sup>1</sup>

Bernd Roling  
trans. David Mossop

*Introduction*

Carl von Linné owes his fame in the modern era primarily to his establishment of taxonomy and the concomitant development of binomial nomenclature, in accordance with which animals and plants are still classified to this day.<sup>2</sup> Linné had been working on this system and its theoretical principles from 1730, and formulated the system's foundations in his *Philosophia botanica*. Animals, vegetables, minerals: all three realms of nature could be placed in this way within a universal order; to classify a creature was also to name and define it correctly. Starting with Uppsala and the botanical worlds of his neighbours' gardens,<sup>3</sup> Linné devised a grid

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the university libraries in Göttingen and Helsinki for their support in the creation of this study. I am also beholden to Anne Eusterschulte, Dorothee Huff, Hanns-Peter Neumann, and Anita Traninger.

<sup>2</sup> Carl von Linné's establishment of binomial nomenclature and the notion of species is reconstructed by e.g. Larson J.L., *Reason and Experience: The Representation of Natural Order in the Work of Carl von Linné* (Berkeley: 1971), passim; Leikola A., "The Development of the Species Concept in the Thinking of Linnaeus", in Atran S. – Burckhardt R.W. (ed.), *Histoire du concept d'espèce dans les science de la vie* (Paris: 1987) 45–59; Bobrov E.G., *Карл Линней 1707–1778* (Leningrad: 1970) 150–163; Callot É., *La philosophie de la vie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Étudiée chez Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, La Mettrie, Diderot, d'Holbach, Linné* (Paris: 1965) 390–433; and Heller J.L., "The Early History of Binomial Nomenclature", in: Heller J.L., *Studies in Linnaean Method and Nomenclature* (Berlin – Bern: 1983) 41–75. For the gradual ascendancy of Linnéan taxonomy and the guiding principle of species in the mid-eighteenth century in general, see e.g. Mayr E., *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the View Point of a Zoologist* (Cambridge, MA – London: 1999 [first published 1942]) 102–122; Ritterbush P.C., *Overtures to Biology: The Speculations of Eighteenth-Century Naturalists* (New Haven – London: 1964) 109–122; Stafleu F.A., *Linnaeus and the Linnaeans: The Spreading of their Ideas in Systematic Botany, 1735–1789* (Utrecht: 1971) 143–336; Knight D., *Ordering the World: A History of Classifying Man* (London: 1981) 58–81; or on his predecessors see Slaughter M.M., *Universal Languages and Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: 1982) 65–82.

<sup>3</sup> Linné tells the story of the famous university garden in Linné Carl von – Naclér Samuel (respondent), *Hortus Upsaliensis* (Uppsala, diss.: 1745) 5–30. Having used this as

whose concrete and objective members were the species of the world, while the higher orders, the classes and genera, could also have their place – at least in the mind of their Creator, who had determined this order from the very beginning.<sup>4</sup> It was this very mind of the Creator which Linné felt at work within himself during the act of naming a creature. Linné could, as he claimed in the introduction to his *Systema naturae*, become the Creator's instrument, like a second Adam.<sup>5</sup> It is obvious that the classification process must be counted among the great achievements of the eighteenth century; the fact that it was a paradigm of the era's drive to order, if not its most important manifestation, has already been very aptly highlighted by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things*.<sup>6</sup>

But how should the scientist act when the conventional structure of creation, accepted by the majority of the population, and the scientific mind of the observer could not, to put it in simple terms, be brought into harmony? How should the educated man treat those phenomena which appeared to defy classification and definition, and therefore objectifica-

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his starting point, Linné turned his attention to the gardens of all of Uppsala and its environs. For this, see the collection Linné Carl von, *Ungdomsskrifter*, collected by Åhrling E. (Stockholm: 1888), with a illustration of the university garden on 271. A whole study is dedicated to Linné's fascination with gardens: Landell N.-E., *Trädgårdens mästaren* (Stockholm: 1997) *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Linné Carl von, *Philosophia botanica, in qua explicantur fundamenta botanica cum definitionibus partium, exemplis terminorum, observationibus rariorum* (Stockholm, Gottfried Kiesewetter: 1751) § 8, "Differentiae", 202–232; also in the annotated modern English translation: Linné Carl von, *Philosophia botanica*, trans. Freer S. (Oxford: 2003) § 8, 219–255; or Linné Carl von, *Fundamenta botanica quae Maiorum operum Prodomi instar Theoriam Scientiae Botanicae per breves Aphorismos tradunt* (Amsterdam, Salomon Schouten: 1736) § 8, 26–29. The work of purging the nomenclature and of correct taxonomy begins with Linné Carl von, *Critica botanica, in qua nomina plantarum generica, specifica, et variantia examini subijciuntur* (Leiden, Konrad Wishoff: 1737).

<sup>5</sup> Linné Carl von, *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species, cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis*, 3 vols., 10th ed. (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1758) vol. 1, Introitus, 3f.; or the well-known introduction in Linné Carl von, *Fauna Suecica sistens Animalia Sueciae Regni: quadrupedia, aves, amphibia, pisces, insecta, vermes* (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1746) 8–13. Linné's self-valorisation is the subject of Harrison P., "Linnaeus as a Second Adam? Taxonomy and the Religious Vocation", in Bråkenhielm C.R. (ed.), *Linnaeus and Homo Religiosus: Biological Roots of Religious Awareness and Human Identity* (Uppsala: 2009) 175–189.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: 1989) 136–179 (first published in French in 1966) and Foucault M., *Archeology of Knowledge* (London: 2007) 62–70 (first published in French in 1969). For a summary of the role of classification systems in the establishment of modern thought, see Drouin J.-M., "Von Linné zu Darwin: Die Forschungsreisen der Naturhistoriker", in Serres M. (ed.), *Elemente einer Geschichte der Wissenschaften* (Frankfurt: 1994) 569–595, here 579–586.



tion? The testing ground for a comparative confrontation of such divergent frames of reference could be comprised of those phenomena and occurrences which in the folkloric tradition laid claim to reality, but which were deemed inferior in a proto-scientific approach based on empiricism, causality, demonstrability, and definition: the objects of the folkloric realm of experience, collective mythemes, oral traditions, and above all the objects of what such a scientific perspective would deem superstition. This article intends to show that Linné makes the rules of objectivity applicable for these objects as well, and treats them according to the standard of impartiality, even if he does not explicitly use this term. The universe of Linné, the Swedish nobleman and the king's personal physician, was thus enriched with data, with *obiecta*, to which we would today deny the status of 'real', at least by our standards of scientific rigour.

To this end, a first step is to examine Linné's theoretical writings for statements in which he makes his position on the treatment of non-scientific traditions and folkloric knowledge clear. The second part of this study will make use of Linné's travel reports to document how he himself treated phenomena which can in the widest sense be categorised as indigenous traditions, and how he was able to record them in accordance with the criteria of objectivity he himself had determined.<sup>7</sup> The third and fourth parts provide some examples which demonstrate how Linné was nevertheless able to take account of these phenomena in his classification system, without in the process confusing them with objects for whose existence there was unambiguous evidence. It will become apparent that Linné initially wanted to encounter all objects in accordance with the standard of impartiality, regardless of their origin or contexts of tradition. As we shall see, this approach resulted in blank spaces within his taxonomy which only further experience could imbue with meaning, and which were initially integrated into the system as *obiecta non confirmata*.

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<sup>7</sup> Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007), 55–59 and seq. In this excellent work, the authors rank Linné among those researchers at the centre of whose work was the search for 'truth-to-nature'. This is also why Linné would have 'dismissed as irresponsible the suggestion that scientific facts should be conveyed without the mediation of the scientist', and 'ridiculed as absurd the notion that the kind of scientific knowledge most worth seeking was that which depended least on the personal traits of the seeker' (59). Even though this verdict may apply to the greater part of Linné's work, this article nevertheless aims to put forward a different, slightly opposing interpretation of Linné, in which he is viewed more strongly as part of the genesis of scientific 'objectivity' and impartiality.

# I. *The Journey Towards Knowledge and the Equality of Everything Knowable*

It was above all in the disputations later compiled in his *Amoenitates academicae* that Linné designed a programme the directives of which, he believed, the academic world would in future have follow in conducting voyages of discovery.<sup>8</sup> In these same treatises, which can be dated to the 1750s, Linné gives his readers a catalogue of advice which demanded scientific objectivity even when confronted with those sources of information which seemed to meet scientific standards only to a limited degree. For Linné, empiricism was here synonymous with an impartial, neutral attitude which one should adopt towards all objects, no matter what their origin. As Linné wrote in a disputation from 1752 entitled *Obstacles to the Progress of Medicine*, fixed opinions and inherited prejudices, which *consuetudo* and *ex more* always applied the same strategies regardless of the object with which they were confronted, were responsible for those errors of thinking which had caused knowledge of the natural sciences to stagnate for so long.<sup>9</sup> However, Linné emphasised that the phenomena, the *obiecta* with which the traveller was confronted, had to be observed for their own sake alone; all phenomena had their intrinsic value. As Linné stated in his “Quaestio Cui bono” of the same year, only open-mindedness, even in the face of the aberrant, could reveal those hidden practical applications which were still covertly extant in the whole of creation.<sup>10</sup>

People had always mocked natural historians, such as Pehr Kalm, who lived among the indigenous population in the primeval forests of Canada in his search for plants, or Linné himself, who kept watch for examples of new insect species among Lapland's swarms of midges.<sup>11</sup> Yet it was

<sup>8</sup> Linné Carl von, *Amoenitates Academicae seu Dissertationes Variæ Physicæ, Medicæ, Botanicæ, antehac seorsim editæ, nunc collectæ et auctæ*, 10 vols. (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1749–1790). Even as the later volumes were being printed, the first treatises appeared in a new edition, partly in Leiden, partly in Erlangen. Parts of this collection were published with the title *Miscellaneous Tracts, relating to natural history, husbandry and physick* in London in 1759, in a translation by Benjamin Stillingfleet; a selective German translation was provided by the natural philosopher Ernst Justus Theodor Höpfner, and was published under the title *Des Ritters Carl von Linné auserlesene Abhandlungen aus der Naturgeschichte, Physik und Artzneywissenschaft* (Leipzig: 1776–1778). This was probably the era's most successful collection of dissertations.

<sup>9</sup> Linné Carl von – Beierstein Johannes Georg (resp.), “Obstacula medicinæ”, in *Amoenitates Academicæ*, vol. 3, no. 33 (first published in Strengnäs, Diss.: 1752) §§ 1–2, 63 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Linné Carl von – Gedner Christophorus (resp.), “Quaestio historico-naturalis: Cui bono?”, in *Amoenitates Academicæ*, vol. 3, no. 41 (first published in Uppsala, Laurentius Magnus Höjer: 1752) § 2, 232 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, § 2, 234.

precisely the marginal and the disdained which could benefit mankind. Linné repeats here and in other writings a view which is very much in line with physico-theologists such as William Derham, namely that the entire cosmos was of a purposeful nature right down to its minutest branch, and that its ultimate aim had to be mankind. Knowledge of nature was therefore never futile.<sup>12</sup> God himself in his omnipotence had created the world in this way; it was man's duty to follow the traces of this divine wisdom in all their majestic variety. The chain of the inherently perfect natural order thus knew neither gaps nor errors; every observation, every note one recorded from creation could therefore contribute to protecting the cartography of the cosmos and later prove to be meaningful.<sup>13</sup>

The general maxims of possible omniscience, corresponding to the assertion of divine omnipotence, and of the initially only potential usefulness for mankind of each observation, which found its place in the universal, divine nexus of the cosmos, were joined by concrete requirements

<sup>12</sup> The movement of physico-theology and the role which Linné played within it will not be further outlined in detail here. Outstanding overviews of the physico-theological writings of this time, including the oft-translated *Insecto-Theologia* by Friedrich Christian Lesser (first published in Frankfurt, Michael Blochberger: 1738), who knew Linné well, or William Derham's *Physico-Theology* (first published in London, William Innys: 1714, also published in Swedish in 1736), which Linné was fond of quoting, are provided e.g. by Michel P., *Physikotheologie: Ursprünge, Leistung und Niedergang einer Denkform* (Zurich: 2008), or Stebbins S., *Maxima in minimis: Zum Empirie- und Autoritätsverständnis in der physikotheologischen Literatur der Frühaufklärung* (Frankfurt: 1980). It is generally overlooked that physico-theological dissertations were also written in Sweden, including some by people within Linné's immediate circle: e.g. Mennander Carl Friedrich – Malm Nicolaus (resp.), *Ichthyo-theologiae primae lineae* (Turku, Jacob Merckell: 1751), who seek to prove the wisdom of God's providence from the anatomy of fish, or Mennander Carl Friedrich – Kalm Pehr – Malm Anders (resp.), *Ornitho-theologiae* (Turku, Jacob Merckell: 1751–1754), who seek to do the same using the anatomy and behaviour of birds.

<sup>13</sup> Linné, "Cui bono?" § 3, 235–237, or e.g. Linné Carl von – Aphonin Matthaeus (resp.), "Usus historiae naturalis", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 7, no. 147 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1766) pars I, c. 1, 409–411, Linné Carl von – Söderberg Olaus (resp.), "Curiositas naturalis", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 1, no. 18 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1748) § 1, 541–543 and passim, and Linné Carl von – Pilgren Johannes (resp.), "Senium Salomonis", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 5, no. 90 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1759) verse I, 255 ff. Regarding these disputations, see especially Callot, *La philosophie* 381–390. A programmatic outline of the ordering principle in nature can be found in Linné's academy address, *Tal om märkvärdigheter uti insecterne* (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1739) (re-issued in Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1752) e.g. fol. A5'–A6', in a Latin variant, translated by Abraham Bäck as "Oratio de memorabilibus in insectis", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 2, Appendix, 391–394. Similarly, e.g. Linné Carl von – Wilcke Christian Daniel (resp.), "Politia naturae", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 6, no. 102 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1760) c. 1, 17–31, or Linné Carl von – Biberger Isaac (resp.), "Oeconomia naturae", in *Amoenitates Academicae*, vol. 2, no. 19 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1749), in the interplay between *propagatio*, *conservatio*, and *destructio*, passim.

which were demanded of the discoverer, regardless of whether, like Linné's apostles, he had to unlock the secrets of Japan, South America, Yemen, Siberia, or the South Sea, or merely comb through his native Scandinavia.<sup>14</sup> In his 1759 vade mecum for the explorer, his *Instructio peregrinatoris*, Linné did not stint on generally binding recommendations, including the demand that when exploring regions both far and near, one should keep the *libido* in check, not talk about politics, avoid the topic of religion as much as possible, not start arguments, and refrain from dice games just as one should practise restraint without seeming rude when offered an overabundance of foods.<sup>15</sup> Aside from these rules on behaviour, which one could have taken from any travel guide, Linné made explicit what he seeks for in his explorer. He should be like that ideal traveller who as a young man had once wandered through the remote regions of Sweden, selfless and driven by an innocent spirit of exploration: like Linné himself.<sup>16</sup> Linné demanded in long lists that the explorer should create sketch books and catalogues, and there systematically describe all minerals, flora, and fauna.<sup>17</sup> Yet the natural scientist should not restrict himself to these facts when describing his travels. How was the animal world used; how were plants put to a higher purpose through agriculture; which animals were hunted, and which domesticated?<sup>18</sup> Neither should the attentive explorer neglect cultural achievements. How were houses and functional buildings constructed? What sort of clothing was worn by the natives in what weather conditions; how did they customarily prepare food, and what sort of furniture and tools did the households contain? The same meticulousness had to be applied to recording the customs of the indigenous population, the way they raised their children, their burial and wedding customs, and, no less important to Linné, the level of chasteness displayed among the natives.<sup>19</sup> Anything could be of significance.

<sup>14</sup> An appraisal of Linné as a discoverer with a view to a potential methodology is provided by e.g. Eliasson P., "Apodemikern Linné. Ett bidrag till den vetenskapliga resans metod", in Jacobsson R. (ed.), *Så varför reser Linné? Perspektiv på Iter Lapponicum 1732* (Umeå: 2005) 53–68, and Hodacs H. – Nyberg K., *Naturalhistorie på resande fot. Om att forska, undervisa och göra karriär i 1700-talets Sverige* (Lund: 2007) 171–210, which contains a Swedish translation of the "Instructio peregrinatoris" 199–210.

<sup>15</sup> Linné Carl von – Nordblad Eric (resp.), "Instructio peregrinatoris", in *Amoenitates Academicæ*, vol. 5, no. 92 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1759) § 3, 300.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, §§ 4–5, 300–302.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, §§ 6–11, 302–306.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, § 12, 306–309.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, § 13, 309–311, see also Linné Carl von, *Philosophia botanica*, Memoranda, 297, English 332 ff.

Linné also deemed it a shortcoming if the scientist heedlessly overlooked the specialist knowledge of indigenous wise men. Linné recommended that the 'pharmacopoeia' in particular, the native doctors' collection of medications, and their *medicamenta domestica*, be examined for usable substances. All other practices and beliefs should also be examined by the traveller in terms of their adaptability.<sup>20</sup>

For Linné, then, there was no hierarchy of things worth knowing: on the contrary, in the maelstrom of knowable realities, all objects could stand together as equals without calling each other into question. In Linné's honorary address in 1741 regarding the journeys of discovery through his own home country, as well as in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Medicine, he formulated the empirical credo upon which journeys should be based. 'Nauta de ventis, de tauris narrat arator.' Sailors should be questioned about the winds, and ploughmen about oxen.<sup>21</sup> Everywhere in Sweden one could encounter expert knowledge, which the scholar had to make his own.<sup>22</sup> He should consider and examine everything. The *ratiocinatio* required the *experimentum*, required concrete observation, or would remain, as Linné emphasised, a *somnium* and a *phantasma*. Yet *experimentum* also meant going out into the land, and among the people, in order to observe matters for oneself.<sup>23</sup> Hadn't he himself set the correct example when he endured frost and storm in the North, climbed mountains, and roamed through the wastes of Lapland? Who would have known how healthy the raw and alcohol-free diet of the Sami people could be if no one had gone to find them and undertaken the effort to question them?<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Linné, *Instructio peregrinatoris* §§ 14–15, 311–313. A contemporary example is provided by the opium reaching Europe from the Orient, the apparent advantages and disadvantages of which Linné coolly reports on, but on whose ultimate usefulness he nonetheless declines to provide a verdict. There were simply too few facts available. See Linné Carl von – Georgius Georg Eberhard, *Opium quod dissertatione medica sistit* (Uppsala: Erdmann, 1775) §§ 6–7, 10–13.

<sup>21</sup> It is likely that the deliberate wit of Linné's inaugural lecture includes the fact that the verses recited by him are actually taken from the elegies of Propertius (Propertius, *Elegiarum libri IV*, ed. Fedeli P. (Leipzig: 1994) II, 1, V. 43) and adjoined the following verses (V. 44–46): *Enumerat miles vulnera, pastor ovis; / nos contra angusto versantes proelia lecto: / qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem*. The classically educated audience in Uppsala could hardly have failed to pick up on this note.

<sup>22</sup> Linné Carl von, *Oratio qua peregrinationum intra patriam asseritur necessitas*, in *Amoenitates Academicæ*, vol. 2, Appendix (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1741) 414 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 409 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 415 ff. On the Sami people's ascetically healthy way of living, which can be traced, topos-like, throughout Linné's works, see e.g. Broberg G., "Varför reser Linné? Vårfor springer samen?", in Jacobsson (ed.), *Så varför reser Linné?* 19–52, here 39–43, or Landell N.-E., *Doctor Carl Linnaeus. Physician* (London: 2008) 155–158.

Mineralogists, botanists, zoologists, and dieticians should not ignore folk knowledge. Every doctor should seek out the medical expertise of the agrarian population and examine which strategies the people used.<sup>25</sup> In his speech, Linné clearly emphasised how the data thus acquired should be utilised. As Linné observed, Descartes demanded of scholars that they subject all knowable content to scrutiny in order to recognise only demonstrable knowledge. A comparable procedure was of no use to the researcher, however. Although it was certain, Linné stated, that not all the phenomena one had recorded in one's native country could be made public, not least to protect one's countrymen and nation from ridicule, too great a scepticism towards the experiential realities of simple people was of equally little use: natural curiosity and its achievements would always be the first victims of such scepticism.<sup>26</sup>

## II. Linné's Travel Reports as Diaries of Impartiality

Do Linné's travel reports, the scientific journals which he created during his extensive journeys through Sweden, meet his own standards?<sup>27</sup> Are they characterised by an empirical impartiality, even towards objects which might have warranted a negative judgement? In other words, could observations which were compatible with systematic thought structures here stand side by side with phenomena from folklore without this devaluing the latter? Did the principle of value-free examination thus also apply to the objects of folklore? Linné's travel reports composed in Swedish, the testimony of his dissection of his native country, are characterised by a sober, almost laconic tone which clearly stands out from the rhetoric of his era, as well as from the language of his Latin speeches.<sup>28</sup> This can

<sup>25</sup> Linné, *Instructio peregrinatoris* 416–425.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 425–427.

<sup>27</sup> A general outline of the young Linné's journeys of discovery through the Swedish provinces can be found in the numerous Linné biographies, e.g. Jackson B.D., *Linnaeus: The Story of his Life, adapted from the Swedish of Theodor Magnus Fries* (London: 1923) 199–209; Blunt W., *The Compleat Naturalist: A Life of Linnaeus* (London: 2001) (first published in London: 1971) 137–146, 198–208; Hagberg K., *Carl Linnaeus* (Stockholm: 1957) 56–75; or Gourlie N., *The Prince of Botanists* (London: 1953) 42–70, 161–165. A panorama of the era is provided by Frängsmyr T., *Svensk idéhistoria. Bildning och vetenskap under tusen år*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: 2000) vol. I, 236–250.

<sup>28</sup> A general outline of the Swedish style in Linné's travel reports and its preconditions in contemporary rhetoric is provided by Ebel U., *Studien zur skandinavischen Reisebeschreibung von Linné bis Andersen* (Frankfurt: 1981) 17–63.

hardly be explained by those stylistic prescriptions to which a diary was subject. In fact, the phenomena which Linné the wanderer encounters are recorded side by side in his reports with an indifference which often strikes one as bizarre. Flower formations are described in the same tone as the still-fresh remains after an execution, body parts which were piled up on a wagon wheel and left to rot. With Linné, one rarely encounters empathy; apart from a few now famous exceptions such as the mines of Falun or the midnight sun of the polar regions, he is rarely tempted to make emotional comments or poetic similes.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it is remarkable how little difference there is between those of his travel reports which from an early stage were intended for publication – such as his journey to Småland or Gotland, or to Västergötland and Scania – and the ones which did not find their way into print, such as his first journey to Lapland, which at least circulated among Linné's students in manuscript format, or his journey to Dalarna, which was released for wider circulation only after his death.<sup>30</sup> This dispassionate, deliberately sober representation of the phenomena with which Linné the wanderer found himself confronted, and the cold Swedish language, often artificially enriched with technical Latinisms, already point towards a concept of impartiality. The intention was to convey to every scholar that the reports merely provided a fund of objects whose core constituents still awaited further classification.

We can see how Linné confronts his readers with seemingly deviant traditions, with superstitions and folklore, and the attitude he took to these. There are times when Linné, as he himself demanded, distances himself from the notions held by the rural population. More frequently, however, he allows the agrarian experiential reality to stand in its own right, and draws more from it than one could expect. Linné accords it an autonomous potency. To him, it seemed to form a reality which was as yet awaiting its integration in the holistic system of the already mapped world.

<sup>29</sup> Linné Carl von, *Dalaresan tillsammans med Berslagsresan*, eds. Casson A. – Jacobsson R. (Örebro: 2007) Falun, 259 ff., in English as Linné Carl von, *The Dalarna Journey, together with Journeys to the Mines and Works*, trans. Casson A. (Örebro: 2007) Falun, 258–261. In his descriptions of the northern lights, Linné's euphoria accorded with the excitement shown by his contemporaries. On this subject, see also Pihljaja P.-M., "Tutkijoita revontulten mailla: Pohjoisen ilmiöt tutkimuskohteina 1700-luvulla", in Pekonen O. – Stén J. (eds.), *Lapin tuhat tarinaa. Antto Leikolan juhlakirja* (Porvoo: 2012) 21–30.

<sup>30</sup> For one example of how the Lapland report was applied, see e.g. Linné Carl von – Lindberg Friedrich, *Nutrix noverca* (Uppsala: Laurentius Höjer, 1752) § 3, 19 ff.



A first group is represented by those phenomena which did not stand up to further scrutiny. They were based on erroneous fundamental pre-suppositions, or revealed themselves to be Papist imports and needed to be shunned for this reason alone, or else they came under the broad, and for Linné highly arbitrarily defined, rubric of *superstitio*. Linné accords the phenomena a neutral description cleansed of the previous preconceptions, frees them of their historic ballast, and attempts to treat them as context-free *obiecta*. In this first case, impartiality had to go hand in hand with the freeing of the object from previous opinions and judgments. Once cleansed of the old, often popular prejudices and fixed by the impartiality of the scientist, in the majority of instances it lost its potential as a threat.

Often, a precise examination by the nomenclator, an exhaustive determination of type and source, sufficed for Linné to eliminate any uncertainties. In Småland, when pestilence spread among their cattle herds, the farmers buried one of the dead beasts on their neighbour's property to ward off the threat of disease.<sup>31</sup> Also in Småland, Linné recorded a catalogue of wedding and holiday customs which seemed at best strange to him. Before the wedded couple were united, the bride bound their shoelaces together to ensure continuing prosperity during their marriage. On St. John's Eve, it was forbidden to pick green objects up off the ground. On Maundy Thursday, people nailed crosses to their doors to ward off witches. At Christmas, one had to light two candles, and if these went out, it foretold the death of one's parents. If the dogs scraped at the ground by the front door, this also foretold a death. No berries were allowed to be picked along the church path, as they attracted corpse worms. And if, Linné added, one eats crabs, need one then fear cancer? If grains of wheat fell underneath the table at Christmas, so the farmers believed, the prospects for next year's harvest were promising. Or, Linné added, did this not rather suggest lazy threshers? If theologians engaged more with natural history, they could easily provide their charges with

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<sup>31</sup> Linné Carl von, *Öländska och Gothländska Resa förrättad år 1741* (Stockholm, Gottfried Kiesewetter: 1745), Småland, Maj 27, 28 ff. Also in a more recent edition, Linné Carl von, *Öländska resa förrättad 1741*, ed. Molde B. (Stockholm: 1958), Småland, Maj 27, 41 ff. An older German translation has been published as Linné Carl von, *Des Herrn Archiaters und Ritters von Linné Reisen durch einige schwedische Provinzen*, 2 vols. (Halle, Johann Jacob Curt: 1764–65) vol. 1: *Erster Theil welcher die Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland enthält*, dort Småland, 27 May, 33 ff.



enlightenment.<sup>32</sup> When Linné cast his attention over the relics of witch-hunts in the Götaland courthouse, he examined the incantations, and blew on the magic horn without, he declared, summoning the devil to plague the teats of the cows. The eagles' feet used by witches to cure pain reminded Linné of the tools of Chinese acupuncture. As Linné declared with horror, it should not have needed all the torture and executions to eradicate the strange ideas of the witches. These ideas had never posed any danger.<sup>33</sup> When Linné was confronted in Lapland with a Finnish spell, namely the attempt to attract bears using their own dung, this magical practice struck him as much too comprehensible to be identified as a magic ritual at all.<sup>34</sup> The Sami were not those people who over many epochs had been unjustly identified as arch-priests of black magic: on the contrary, according to Linné, there were few more innocent representatives among the peoples of Europe than the inhabitants of Lapland.<sup>35</sup> In Lapland, Linné also reported hearing of trolls, and of waters where fish would persistently refuse to fall prey to fishermen who cast their nets there. These, Linné declares, were tall tales, and he had no need to give them any credence.<sup>36</sup>

In some instances within this first group of explicable phenomena which Linné recorded in his travel reports, an exact determination of the fact at hand sufficed to separate the truth from the erroneous opinions with which it was associated. The bizarre congenital defects and extreme deformities with which Linné found himself confronted in Scania could without further difficulty be found a place within the catalogue of nature's malformations

<sup>32</sup> Linné, *Öländska och Gothländska Resa*, Småland, August. 5, 308–311, in German as Linné, *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Småland, 5. August, 328–333.

<sup>33</sup> Linné, *Öländska och Gothländska Resa*, Småland, August 19, 330 ff., in German as Linné, *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Småland, 19 August, 349 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Linné Carl von, *Iter lapponicum – Lappländska resan 1732*, eds. Hellbom A. – Fries S. – Jacobsson R., 3 vols. (Umeå: 2003–05) vol. 1, 186, vol. 2, commentary, 243, in German as Linné Carl von, *Lappländische Reise*, trans. Artmann H.C. (Frankfurt: 1964) 218. On the bear-related magic practices described in contemporary literature, see Pentikäinen J., *Golden King of the Forest: The Lore of the Northern Bear* (Saarijärvi: 2007) 60–62.

<sup>35</sup> Linné Carl von, *Flora lapponica exhibens plantas per Lapponiam crescentes, secundum Systema Sexuale collectas in itinere* (Amsterdam, Salomon Schouten: 1737) Fungi, 363 ff. Also in the new Finnish translation with comments as Linné Carl von, *Lapin kasveja. Carl von Linnén latinankielisestä teoksesta Flora Lapponica (1737)* trans. and ed. Itkonen-Kaila M. (Helsinki: 1991) 133 ff. A historical synopsis of the magical topoi ascribed to the Sami people is provided by Moyne E.J., *Raising the Wind: The Legend of Lapland and Finland Wizards in Literature* (Newark: 1981) passim.

<sup>36</sup> Linné Carl von, *Iter lapponicum*, vol. 1, 76, vol. 2, commentary, 114, in German as Linné Carl von, *Lappländische Reise* 102.

provided by contemporary teratology. These were not instances of diabolical or God-sent omens.<sup>37</sup> In the cathedral at Visby, Linné inspected what were claimed to be the bones of a giant displayed there. They were in fact the remains of a whale. In front of the painting of Saint George in that same cathedral was the desiccated cadaver of a mighty fish, the eating of which, said the native population, would bring about the end of the world. In reality, however, these were the bones of a *piscis malacoperygius*, of, Linné observed, a common though sizeable salmon. The end of the world would already have occurred many times over, as the local cuisine would have been hard-pressed to get by without this species of fish.<sup>38</sup> The inhabitants of Oennaby in Västergötland showed Linné a body of water with a blood-red colouration and blamed witches for this omen. The colour lay on top of the water like rhubarb powder. It was no miracle, however, but, as Linné concluded following a thorough examination, a red algae which had spread through the water.<sup>39</sup> On his way to Lapland, Linné was shown a tree which the natives claimed to be a barren apple tree upon which trolls had cast a spell. A closer examination showed it to be a common elm, rarely found in the North and indeed incapable of bringing forth apples.<sup>40</sup>

In these records of native ritual beliefs, the listing of magic for the protection from and warding off of evil still practised by the rural population, Linné differed but little from his era's first collectors of folklore.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Linné Carl von, *Ölandska och Gothländska Resa förrättad år 1749* (Stockholm, Gottfried Kiesewetter: 1751), Malmö, Junius 13, 188 ff., Everlöf, Julius 3, 275 ff. In a modern edition, Linné Carl von, *Skånska resa på höga överhetens befallning förrättad år 1749*, ed. von Sydow C.-O. (Stockholm: 1959), Malmö, Junius 13, 219, Everlöf, Julius 3, 306 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Linné, *Ölandska och Gothländska Resa*, Gothland, Junius 23, 165 ff., in German as *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Gothland, 23 June, 183 ff.

<sup>39</sup> Linné Carl von, *Wästgöta-Resa, på Riksens högloftige Ständers befallning förrättad år 1746* (Stockholm, Gottfried Kiesewetter: 1747), Junius 13, 14 ff., in German as Linné, *Reisen durch einige schwedische Provinzen*, vol. 2: *Reise durch Westgothland, welche auf Befehl der hochlöblichen Stände des Königreiches Schweden im Jahr 1746 angestellt worden*, 16 June, 18 ff. For similiar examples see also e.g. Linné Carl von – Avelin, Gabriel Emanuel (resp.), *Specimen academicum sistens miracula insectorum* (Uppsala, Laurentius Magnus Höjer: 1752) § 3, 8–13.

<sup>40</sup> Linné Carl von, *Iter lapponicum*, vol. 1, 8, vol. 2, commentary, 37, in German as *Lappländische Reise*, 18. Certain popular beliefs revealed themselves as variations of the natural order: the fact that Swedish farmers forbade the cursing of any hawk for the killing of a chicken between Michaelmas and Candlemas merely serves to show Linné that the animals would otherwise have starved to death in the cold, according to Linné Carl von – Ekmarck Karl Daniel (resp.), "Migrationes avium", in *Amoenitates Academiae*, vol. 4, no. 75 (first published in Uppsala, Diss.: 1757) § 5, 581.

<sup>41</sup> For the different varieties of protective spell in popular Swedish magic, see e.g. Klintberg B., *Svenska trollformler* (Stockholm: 1980) 39–57; on the variants of erotic magic

The Scandinavian antiquaries were also imbued with the Enlightenment spirit of the 'Frihetstiden' of the mid-eighteenth century, those liberal years from 1719–1772 which ended with the reign of Gustav III, and which were no longer on the alert for demonic practices after the final conclusion of the witch trials. They recorded the ritualistic practices of the rural population as a variant of the superstition which had been virulent since the classical era, and as a heathenism whose essence had been overcome and which could no longer pose an occult threat. Johann Ihre, one of the founders of modern runology, published his tract *De superstitionibus hodiernis* in Uppsala in 1750. It provided a compendium of folk religion, including ornithomancy, revenants, protective spells against the *Trollskott*, back pain caused by witches, and the advice to urinate on wedding rings to protect against impotence. The Uppsala-based Professor no longer gave credence to any of these rituals.<sup>42</sup> At around the same period as Linné's travels, the pastor Petrus Gaslander, who worked in Linné's native Småland, was responsible for creating an entire collection of agrarian customs, in order to preserve for posterity the burial, baptismal, and wedding rites, as well as the medicines and protective rituals, of the local rural population. However, this catalogue was not printed until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Other scholars of the era, theologians and historians, including Johannes Thorwöste or the great geologist Johannes Browallius, whom Linné knew well, were doing the same as Ihre and Gaslander in the middle of the century.<sup>44</sup> Curses, occult practices, love spells and

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in Scandinavian tradition, Gambo R., *Norske trollformler og magiske ritualer* (Oslo: 1984) 73–78.

<sup>42</sup> Ihre Johann – Moman Jonas (resp.), *De superstitionibus hodiernis ex gentilismo residuis* (Uppsala, Diss.: 1750), there on witch-induced back pains c. 3, §§ 2–6, 42–62, on the wedding rings c. 2, § 6, 37. On comparable practices, see Honko L., *Krankheitsprojekte. Untersuchungen über eine urtümliche Krankheitserklärung* (Helsinki: 1959) 126–146.

<sup>43</sup> Gaslander Petrus, *Beskrifning om swenska allmogens sinnelag, seder wid de årliga högtider, frierier, barndop, begrafningar, widskeppelser, lefnadssätt i mat och dryck, kläde-drägt, sjukdomar och läkemedel, orternas läge och beskaffenhet* (Stockholm, Lars Wennberg: 1774) (reprinted in Stockholm: 1982).

<sup>44</sup> Thorwöste Johannes – Maxenius Gabriel (resp.), *De effectibus fascino-naturalibus* (Turku, Johannes Kiämppe: 1732) passim; Browallius Johannes – Trolle Laurentius (resp.), *Meletema de superstitionibus in Patria* (Turku: 1744) passim. It was hardly a coincidence that it was also Johannes Browallius who provided Linné's *Critica botanica* of 1737, 1–24, with an appendix entitled "De Historiae naturalis lectione, discursus", which hardly differed from Linné's physico-theological meditations and his demand that natural observation be interpreted as creationary propaedeutics and as a school of divine recognition. For general information on the character of Johannes Browallius, see Klinge M., *Professorer. 35 professorer under lika många årtionden vid Kungliga Akademien i Åbo senare Kejserliga Alexanders-Universitet numera Helsingfors Universitet* (Jyväskylä: 1989) 58–64.

sympathy spells which were supposed to protect against the evil eye, were recorded, examined in terms of their scientific basis, or immediately dismissed as blatant unbelief and anti-Lutheran heresy.<sup>45</sup> In one of his own manuscripts, which was created in connection with the guide on living a healthy life which he wrote as a young man, the *Diaeta naturalis*, Linné himself ultimately collects under the rubric 'superstitio' a whole list of unusual and idiosyncratic beliefs as found among the rural population. They predominantly accord with the information contained in the travel reports, and Linné refrained from further comment in the rest of this text intended for household use.<sup>46</sup>

However, Linné had not sought to provide a complete catalogue of the various forms of superstition; he showed more trust in the phenomena of popular lived reality than did many of his scholarly contemporaries. A second group of phenomena recorded in his travel reports could therefore remain intact in their intrinsic value. Linné gave an account of them and in the best spirit of impartiality, refrained from evaluating them further, and even seemed to feel sympathetic towards them. For Linné, impartiality in this case meant not only freeing the object from previous erroneous judgements about it, as in the case of the first category, but also and above all not burdening it with any additional hasty, equally unverified judgements. The objects still awaited further examination, even if other scholars had already dismissed them.

In Bragnum in Västergötland, Linné encountered two local healers who boasted of their ability to cure the sufferings of the rural population for a fee. His companions mocked the two peasants and invented a series of

<sup>45</sup> Browallius, *Meletema de superstitionibus in Patria*, there opposing the numerous erroneous condemnations of native 'witches' § 16, 14 ff.; Thorwöste, *De effectibus fascino-naturalibus*, on the natural explanation of magic rituals § 7, 22–25. In contrast to Johannes Ihre or Johannes Browallius, Johannes Thorwöste still ascribed to the devil a substantial role in the efficacy of occult practices. On Johannes Thorwöste's text "De effectibus", which is of major importance to the early history of Finnish folkloristics, see e.g. Sarajas A.-M., *Studiet av folkdiktningen i Finland intill slutet av 1700-talet* (Stockholm: 1982) 110–113, Siikala A.-L., *Suomalainen šamanismi. Mielikuvien historiaa* (Helsinki: 1994) 206. A Finnish translation with commentary is provided by Maxenius G., *De effectibus fascino-naturalibus eli Runoloitsujen vaikutuksista, tiivistäen kääntäen ja koomentein varustanut Hublin N.-G.* (Kuopio: 1985). For a general outline of Johannes Thorwöste as a teacher in Turku, see Hultin A., *Finlands litteratur under Frihetstiden* (Helsinki: 1906) 181–183.

<sup>46</sup> Wikman K.R.V., "Superstitionerna i Lachesis-manuskriptet. Några Linnéanteckningar jämte anmärkningar", *Svenska Linnésällskapets-Årsskrift* (1968/69) 25–40, there the text of the manuscript section transcribed by Wikman 30–36. Linné's systematic treatment of mental illnesses, which completely dispensed with demonic influences, was similar to this. For this, see Uddenberg U., *Linné och mentalsjukdomarna* (Stockholm: 2012) 45–70.

illnesses in order to request a cure from these two practitioners of folk medicine. Linné took no further part in their game. The claim that epilepsy could be cured for two Reichstaler seemed to him a dubious one; yet the St. John's wort kept in the two men's apothecary, as well as their practice of bloodletting, convinced him that he was not dealing with two dilettantes.<sup>47</sup> As Linné emphasised, even a helmsman who doesn't know all the cliffs can steer his passengers into safe harbour.<sup>48</sup>

Linné went even further. In Wirestrand by Wexiö, he encountered a practitioner of magic and medicine named Ingeborg, of whose world-view he was able to learn something. This wise woman taught that fallen angels lived on here on Earth as *Näcker* and *Elfvar*, as sprites of the water, earth, and air.<sup>49</sup> They protected their domains in the natural world, as other of Linné's colleagues had previously learned.<sup>50</sup> Linné was assured that if a person desecrated these territories by urinating on a sacred grove, as sometimes happened, the spirits merged with the person's shadow and brought them ill health. Ingeborg, who could confer with the spirits, would then consult the clothing of the sick person and thereby arrange for a sacrificial offering which would remove the curse. Although Linné commented that the semiotics, as he puts it, of these therapies exceeded his experiences, he also affirmed that the aged woman was revered like a saint by the population, despite the conflicts she had to endure with the church.<sup>51</sup> Linné did not say that the belief in elves and sprites could be superstition;

<sup>47</sup> The extent of the recognition shown by Linné at the beginning of his career to folk medicine and the beliefs associated with it are documented by the notebook dating from his youth, in which are also recorded the suitability of *hypericum* (St. John's wort) for exorcisms and the usefulness of *anagallis* (scarlet pimpernel) against the threat of witchcraft. For this, see Linné Carl von, *Notebook 1725–1727*, transcribed by Lindell T., ed. Hansen L. (London – Whitby: 2009) no. 87, 99, no. 118, 130. Neither was removed from the later catalogue of healing plants; see Linné Carl von – Gustav Jacob Carlbohm (resp.), *Censura medicamentorum simplicium vegetabilium* (Stockholm: Peter Georg Nyström, 1753) passim.

<sup>48</sup> Linné, *Wästgöta-Resa*, Julius 1, 100–102, in German as Linné, *Reise durch Westgothland*, 1 July, 115–118.

<sup>49</sup> On water sprites in the belief of the rural Scandinavian population, see e.g. Stattin J., *Näcken. Spelman eller gränsvakt?* (Stockholm: 2008) (first published 1984) 58–96. Ingeborg's beliefs are nevertheless singular.

<sup>50</sup> On water and air sprites in the disputations of this era, see e.g. Ihre, *De superstitionibus hodiernis*, c. 2, § 4, 21–26, or Valerius Harald – Piil Andreas Samuel (resp.), *Disputatio parallelismum Microcosmi et Macrocosmi delineans* (Uppsala, Johan Henrik Werner: 1712) c. 5, § 3, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Linné, *Ölandska och Gothländska Resa*, Småland, Augustus 7, 312–314, in German as *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Småland, 7. August, 332 ff.; see also the only explicit note within the rubric of 'superstitio' in the Lachesis manuscript regarding the *Elfwer*: Wikman, "Superstitionerna", Text, no. 113, 36.

he unquestioningly accepts the teachings of the wise woman. Could there be a realm of potency at work here whose scope had maybe simply not yet been proven?

Linné heard reports of the bones of a giant in the churchyard of Möckleby. He decided to dig for them and, as he recorded in his travel report, did indeed find giant pelvic bones, which point to a deceased person of mighty proportions, far above four cubits in height. Had giants existed after all during the time of the ancient Swedes, as the sagas reported?<sup>52</sup> At the cemetery of Frenedefors in Västergötland, Linné was asked whether it was permitted to harvest vegetables which have grown on holy soil. He held a short discourse on the transmigration of souls; there was the metempsychosis of the Pythagoreans, and also a migration of the organic body. Corpses could turn back into plants; many a noble maiden may have in this way metamorphosed into a dull henbane plant. Yet under no circumstances should one eat anything grown in a cemetery, Linné emphasised, as the peace of the dead is sacred, whatever should happen.<sup>53</sup> During his travels through Öland, Linné finally decided to make the crossing to the famous island of Blåkulla, which had become renowned during the great Swedish magic trials a century earlier as the meeting place of witches and the site of the witches' sabbath. Linné recorded that the sailors along that coast had warned him not to call the island Blåkulla, but rather to use its second name of "Blue Virgin", so as to avoid encountering a storm during his crossing. The text itself shows that Linné did not heed this advice, however, and indeed, as he was forced to admit without any irony, a heavy storm blew up during the trip, and the crew barely escaped with their lives. Upon his arrival, the spirit of the place seemed almost to overwhelm Linné. Forbidding cliffs, mysterious stone circles, and stunted bushes surrounded him; the land could not be bleaker. Linné created an index of the vegetation growing here, but then removed himself from the island's aura as rapidly as possible and fled.<sup>54</sup> Even while giving his

<sup>52</sup> Linné, *Ölandska och Gothländska Resa*, Oeland, 6. Juni, 81, in German as *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Oeland, 6. Juni, 92. A study written in Lund with the aim of providing reasons for this theory regarding the existence of giants was able to draw upon Linné's records for direct support; see Bring Sven – Hall Johan (resp.), *Dissertatio historica de Gigantibus* (Lund, Carl Gustav Berling: 1752) § 8, 18 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Linné, *Wästgöta-Resa*, Dal, 225, in German as Linné, *Reise durch Westgothland*, Dal, 261–263. For a brief discussion on metempsychosis, see also Linne Carl von – Alander Olav Reinhard (resp.), *Dissertatio academica sistens inebriantia* (Uppsala. Diss.: 1762) § 7, 15 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Linné, *Ölandska och Gothländska Resa*, Oeland, 15. Juni, 128–132, in a modern edition as Linné, *Ölandska resa*, Oeland, 15 June, 133–137, in German as Linné, *Reisen durch Oeland und Gothland*, Oeland, 15 Juni, 141–145.



speech that same year on his explorations of the local regions, he began his address with a reference to his crossing to the witches' island which had made such an unexpected and unnatural impression on him.<sup>55</sup>

### III. *Impartiality at the Limits of Experience*

It has perhaps become apparent that Linné's demand for judgement-free observation allowed for levels of reality which were initially not amenable to definition. Keeping scepticism at bay was synonymous with the desire to allow phenomena to take their course. Deviant experiences which one could have dismissed as superstition in this way remained in an interim state for Linné, one which could oscillate between the pattern of the natural order and pure fantasy, a waiting room upon whose occupants no final judgement had yet been passed. Popular belief and his own brand of empiricism – upon which, as we have seen, Linné insisted – could both find their place here. Linné uses two approaches to leave unchanged the preternatural and supernatural occurrences which remained unamenable to the pattern of classification. The first approach he pursued consisted in inserting blank spaces within the nomenclature of the natural order, which Linné placed with the hope of filling these free spaces in the course of further empirical observation, thus freeing their objects from ambiguity. Too much doubt could have stood in the way of truth, because the possibility still existed of bringing the expert knowledge of the people in line with science and harmonising it with science's standards. Linné's second approach was more piquant and placed the phenomena of his experiential reality on a different level which did not burden the pattern of the natural order with hypotheses, but instead blurred its boundaries. Other, higher, and occult levels of reality were thinkable, in which those phenomena for which the conventional classification had become too narrow could find their place. Linné takes the first approach in the footnotes to his taxonomy, the second in his famous, posthumously published work *Nemesis divina*, which in many places links directly to the descriptions of folklore in his travel reports.

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<sup>55</sup> Linné, *Oratio qua peregrinationum intra patriam asseritur necessitas* 416 ff.

### III.1 *The Touchstone of Taxonomy: The Unverified Creature*

First we come to the semi-mythological creatures which we would today at best classify as part of cryptozoology, but which then had a fixed place in popular belief. Linné was just as little prepared to allow for trolls in his zoological record of Sweden as he was to squeeze them into the pattern of his *Systema naturae*. Despite the finds at Möckleby and in contrast to many of his contemporaries, he was also not willing to give any credence to giants. Other creatures, however, managed to at least penetrate to the interim state within the taxonomy, into the empire of the provisional, without in the process actually entering the classification itself. The first version of the *Systema naturae* from 1735 contains a prelude to the actual classes and genera in the form of a rubric titled 'Paradoxa', in which the dragon, the basilisk, the hydra, and the famous tree geese, vegetable-based birds found predominantly in Scotland and created through spontaneous generation, are listed as potential creatures, among others.<sup>56</sup> Linné had anticipated this list in his *Diaeta naturalis*, yet casts considerable doubt on it; its existence was a contradiction to nature.<sup>57</sup> Yet he did not dare erase it entirely.

Furthermore, a creature emerged which can serve as a perfect example of the efforts Linné went to to maintain a value-neutral position when he came across traditions which had their organic place in popular belief but which could withstand scientific scrutiny only to a limited degree. Did mermaids exist?<sup>58</sup> There had been a wealth of empirical evidence for their presence along the Scandinavian coasts and off Iceland. In Norway, but also along the beaches of Denmark, mermaids had been seen time and again during the decades preceding Linné's work. They were still being described in 1753 by Erik Pontoppidan in his *Naturgeschichte Norwegens*,<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Linné Carl von, *Systema naturae sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita* (Leiden, Haak: 1735), reprinted as *Systema Naturae 1735 with an introduction and a first English translation of the 'Observationes'* by Engel-Ledeboer M.S.J. – Engel H. (Niewkoop: 1964), *Regnum animale*, 12, English 29.

<sup>57</sup> Linné Carl von, *Diaeta naturalis 1733. Linnés tankar om ett naturenligt levnadssätt*, ed. Ugglä Arvid Hj. (Uppsala: 1958) § 133, 201.

<sup>58</sup> On Carl von Linné's treatment of the siren or mermaid, see the study von Broberg G., *Homo Sapiens L. Studier i Carl von Linnés naturuppfattning och människolära* (Motala: 1975) 183–186, Broberg G., "Homo sapiens: Linnaeus' Classification of Man", in: Frängsmyr T. (ed.), *Linnaeus: The Man and His Work* (Canton: 1994) 156–194, here 177–179, and briefly also Koerner L., *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Cambridge, MA: 2000) 93.

<sup>59</sup> Pontoppidan Erik, *Versuch einer natuerlichen Historie von Norwegen: Worinnen die Luft, Grund und Boden, Gewaesser, Gewaechse, Mineralien, Steinarten, Thiere, Voegel und Fische, und endlich das Naturel wie auch die Gewohnheiten und Lebensarten der Einwohner*



by Lucas Debes in his history of the Faroe Islands,<sup>60</sup> and had been discussed earlier by Thomas Bartholin and Ole Worm, who not only claimed to have seen a specimen off Copenhagen, but also to have dissected another, albeit from Brazil.<sup>61</sup> Linné had remained undecided regarding their existence. When, as a young man, he began in 1738 to publish and edit the ichthyology of Peter Artedi, he included in the rubric of 'plagiuri', primarily comprising the sea cows and walruses, the mermaid Thomas Bartholin claimed to have seen eighty years before, listing it as Genus 52. As Linné added, while the case of the sirens remained unexamined to a substantive degree, no judgement should be made on their existence or non-existence.<sup>62</sup> In his taxonomy of 1758, which expanded on the earlier versions with a wealth of material and new species, the mermaid appeared once more, although now, as previously mentioned, as a footnote, with the comment that the creatures were *nec ulterius a peregrinatoribus confirmata*: had not been confirmed to a greater, and above all conclusive, extent by the travellers.<sup>63</sup> Once again, Linné could not quite bring himself to remove the mermaid completely, even though at this time he clearly seems to be struggling with the existence of these creatures, as can be

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*dieses Koenigreiches beschrieben werden*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, F. C. Mumme: 1753–54) (first published in Danish in Copenhagen, F. C. Mumme: 1752–1753) vol. 2, ch. VIII, §§ 2–5, 351–368. Around the same time Pontoppidan published a compilation of folkloric beliefs in Denmark, under which, significantly, he does not include the mermaids. See Pontoppidan E., *Fejekonst til at udfeje den gamle surdejig eller de i de danske lande tiloversblevne og her for dagen bragte levninger af saavel hedenskap som Papisme*, 1736, trans. Olrik J. (Copenhagen: 1923).

<sup>60</sup> Debes Lucas Jacobson, *Faeroae et Faeroa reserata: Det er Faerøernis Beskrivelse* (Copenhagen: 1673), c. 3, 171 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Bartholin Thomas, *Historiarum anatomicarum et medicarum rariorum Centuria VI*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen, Hauboldt: 1654–61) vol. 1, centuria II, historia 11, 187–190; and Bartholin Thomas, *Cista medica Hafniensis accedit eiusdem domus anatomica brevissime descripta* (Copenhagen, Hauboldt: 1662) 42; Worm Ole, *Museum Wormianum seu Historia Rerum Rariorum: tam Naturalium quam Artificialium, tam domesticarum, quam Exoticarum, quae Hafniae Danorum in aedibus Authoris servatur* (Leiden, Elzevirius: 1655) liber III, c. 11, 276 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Artedus Petrus, *Ichthyologia sive opera omnia de piscibus scilicet: bibliotheca ichthyologica, philosophia ichthyologica, genera piscium, synonyma specierum, descriptiones specierum*, 5 vols. (Leiden, Coenraad Wishoff: 1738) vol. 3, ordo V, no. 52, 81.

<sup>63</sup> Linné Carl von, *Systema naturae* (1758) (first published in Leiden, Haak: 1735) vol. 1, Regnum animalium, Classis I: Mammalia, VIII: Cete, § 39, 77. The same footnote can still be found in the new edition published eight years later; see Linné Carl von, *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species*, 4 vols. (Stockholm, Gottfried Kiesewetter: 1766) vol. 1, Regnum animalium, Classis I: Mammalia, VIII: Cete, § 40, 108.

discerned from his lectures.<sup>64</sup> The matter was stirred up once more when a mermaid was sighted in 1749 off Nyköping, not far from Linné in Uppsala, and of which there were reports in the press of this period.<sup>65</sup> Linné wrote a letter to the Royal Academy of Sciences, stating that confirmation of the report could prove a great enrichment to the natural sciences, but that it must initially remain open as to whether this was after all a fable or a mere illusion.<sup>66</sup> When the sighting of the creature proved inconclusive, Linné let the matter rest. In 1752, he emphasized strongly that in view of the countless *mammalia* of the sea, including whales and sea cows, the zoologists' state of knowledge was still in its infancy, and that further work was required.<sup>67</sup> Linné engaged with the existence of mermaids for a last time in 1766, in a work which was dedicated to a salamander and its new name, *Siren lacertina*. Linné's reservations seem now to have grown even greater, as he commented that the ancients had believed in the legendary sirens, but that in the modern era, these reports could largely be shown to have been invented.<sup>68</sup>

This careful treatment of the mermaid, the siren, or the *havfrue*, as it was known in Swedish, was certainly symptomatic for Linné. A comparable example is perhaps better known.<sup>69</sup> When he received the obscure travel report of his fellow countryman Niels Köping, a seventeenth-century traveller to the Orient who described seeing a strange man-monkey in Indonesia,<sup>70</sup> Linné integrated the report into his description of the satyr species, which since the seventeenth century had also included the orangutan and other primates, and created the sub-category of the nocturnal man, the *homo nocturnus*, in whose footnotes Köping's legendary creature,

<sup>64</sup> Linné Carl von, *Föreläsningar öfver Djurriket*, ed. Lönnberg E. (Uppsala – Berlin: 1913) ordo 1, Hwalar, 174 ff.

<sup>65</sup> *Gentlemen's Magazine* 19 (September, 1749) 428.

<sup>66</sup> Linné Carl von, *Bref och Skrifvelser, utgifna af Uppsala Universitet*, 8 vols. (Stockholm: 1907–22) vol. 2, Stockholm 1908, no. 259, 129.

<sup>67</sup> Linné Carl von – Hager Johannes Heinrich, *Natura pelagi* (Uppsala, Laurentius Höjer: 1752) 13 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Linné Carl von – Österdam Abraham (resp.), *Siren lacertina. Dissertatio academica* (Uppsala, Diss.: 1766) § 1, 1–5, §§ 5–8, 8–14.

<sup>69</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of Linné's treatment of the anthropomorphic intermediate beings, troglodytes, and *homines nocturni*, see the in-depth study by Broberg, *Homo Sapiens L.* 186–205, and Broberg, "Homo sapiens: Linnaeus' Classification of Man" 179–193, as well as Koerner, *Linnaeus* 87 ff., and Tinland F., *L'Homme sauvage. Homo ferus et homo sylvestris. De l'animal à l'homme* (Paris: 1968) 89–94.

<sup>70</sup> Köping Nils Matson, *Beskrifning om en Resa genom Asia, Africa och många andra Hedna länder* (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1743) c. 79, 145 ff.

which apparently even had the gift of language, was allowed to appear.<sup>71</sup> In 1735, the satyr had still been numbered among the “Paradoxa”,<sup>72</sup> free from identification with orang-utans and chimpanzees. This strange figuration hovering between animal and man, which from then on was allowed to pass itself off as ‘nocturnal man’, was still included in the footnotes of many reprints, until it was completely removed from the taxonomy towards the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>73</sup>

Linné’s assumptions were followed by at least some of his apostles, those seventeen scholars who he commissioned to map the flora and fauna of the world and who brought ship-loads of samples back to the ports of the Baltic coast. It was unanimously believed that popular and obscure phenomena should not be denied recognition as potentially existing objects until they could definitively be disproved.<sup>74</sup> When Linné’s student Pehr Kalm accompanied his master on travels through Västergötland in 1742, he, like his mentor, was confronted with reports of a mermaid. At first, Kalm too saw no reason to question these reports; on the contrary, they may have had some measure of truth, even if they could not provide any concrete evidence of their own veracity.<sup>75</sup> A few years later, when Kalm embarked on his great journey to America on Linné’s behalf, the natives of New Jersey managed to persuade him of the legendary abilities of the black snake.<sup>76</sup> They assured Kalm that the creature was able, basilisk-like,

<sup>71</sup> Linné, *Systema naturae* (1758) vol. 1, Regnum animalium, Classis I: Mammalia, I. Primates, § 1, 33, previously already in Linné, *Diaeta naturalis*, § 82, 135 ff., and in a well-known dissertation, Linné Carl von – Hoppius Christian Emmanuel (resp.), *Dissertatio in qua anthropomorpha examini submittit* (Uppsala, Diss.: 1760) 13–16.

<sup>72</sup> Linné, *Systema naturae* (1735), Regnum animale, 12, English 29.

<sup>73</sup> Linné Carl von, *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species* (4 volumes) (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1766) vol. 1, Regnum animalium, Classis I: Mammalia, I. Primates, § 1, 33, and also in the Dutch translation, Linné Carl von, *Sistema de Natuurlyke Historie in IV Ryken, dieren, planten, mineralen en wateren* (Den Haag, Fridericus Staatman: 1765), Ordo I, Geslagt I, § 2, 10 ff., and Plaat II.

<sup>74</sup> In order to provide even a superficial impression of Linné’s influence in Sweden, it must be remembered that the standard bibliography on the tracts and disputation of Linné’s immediate students, Sandermann Olsen S.-E., *Bibliographia discipuli Linnæi – Bibliographies of the 331 Pupils of Linnaeus* (Copenhagen: 1997), contains more than 2500 titles.

<sup>75</sup> Kalm Pehr, *Västgöta och Bohuslänska resa 1742*, eds. Krantz C. – Brusewitz G. (Stockholm: 1977) 18. Augustus, 120 ff.

<sup>76</sup> An overview of the journey through America undertaken by Linné’s Finnish ‘apostle’ Pehr Kalm, who would later take up a professorship in Turku and become one of the most influential Finnish scientists, is provided by the works of Tsubaku R., *Pehr Kalm, Suomalainen Amerikan löytäjä* (Helsinki: 2011) 31–132, and Hollstein L., “Pehr Kalms skildring av resan till England och Amerika 1747–1751 – som global miljöhistoria”, in Müller L. – Rydén G. – Weiss H. (eds.), *Global historia från periferin. Norden 1600–1850* (Lund: 2010) 233–253.

to cast a spell on its victims through an act of *fascinatio*. Neither birds nor squirrels could resist the urge to crawl directly into the maw of the creature; indeed, even people should beware the beast, in order not to fall under its spell. Kalm was given no opportunity to witness for himself the creature's gifts, yet the beliefs of the indigenous population do not strike him as anywhere near absurd enough for him to be able to pass judgement on them.<sup>77</sup> Fredrik Hasselquist, whom Linné had sent to explore the flora and fauna of the Holy Land and Egypt, was told in Palestine of the legendary and frequently witnessed abilities of the chameleon, which, as he was told by the locals, could not only fully adopt the colours of its environment, but which also lived exclusively on air. Hasselquist managed to obtain such an animal, and was at least able to partially verify its metamorphic abilities. Yet the Swedish scholar at the same time fails in his attempts to witness the reptile ingest food. Were the natives therefore right?<sup>78</sup> The question would at least have to remain open.

The explorer of Russia, also a doctoral student under Linné, Johann Peter Falck, who at the behest of Linné and under contract to Empress Catherine mapped Siberia with Peter Simon Pallas, was in the Turkmen region around 1770 when he heard reports of tailed men, *homines caudati*, of whose existence Marco Polo had already claimed to have known.<sup>79</sup> Falck was told that these people, comprising some six thousand families, lived and bred cattle a few days' journey from the city of Mangyshlak. As long as these people went clothed and on foot, their blemish was not visible; when they are mounted on horseback, Falck learned, they were

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The fact that, like Linné's travels, this travel report was also enormously influential for all of Scandinavian literature on account of its descriptions of nature is also rightly underlined once more by Lassila P., *Metsän autuus. Luonto suomalaisessa kirjallisuudessa 1700–1950* (Helsinki: 2011) 29, 77–78.

<sup>77</sup> Kalm Pehr, *En Resa til Norra America, på Kongl. Swenska Wetenskaps Academiens befällning*, 3 vols. (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1753–61) vol. 3, Nya Jersey, May, 140–143; in the contemporary English translation, Kalm Pehr, *Travels into North America, containing its Natural History, and a circumstantial Account of its Plantations and Agriculture in general*, translated by Forster J. R., 2 vols. (London, J. Whiston – B. White: 1771), New Jersey, May 1749, 207–210. Linné himself was able to integrate Kalm's results into his work even before they were printed as a perfect example of *medicina empirica*. For this, see Linné Carl von – Coelln Johan von (resp.), *Specifica canadensium* (Skara, Diss: 1756) § 6, 4 ff.

<sup>78</sup> Hasselquist Fredrik, *Iter palaestinum eller Resa til Heliga Landet, förrättad ifrån år 1749 til 1752*, ed. Linné Carl von (Stockholm, Laurentius Salvius: 1757) Pars II, Classis III, No. 54, 297–301; translated into German as Fredrik Hasselquist, *Reise nach Palästina in den Jahren von 1749 bis 1752* (Rostock, Johann Christian Koppe: 1762) Teil II, Classis III, Nr. 54, 348–351.

<sup>79</sup> Polo Marco, *Il Milione*, ed. Ciccuto M. (Milan: 1998) c. 146, 383.

however forced to ride in a slightly forward-leaning posture on account of their tail. Many of the peoples living in the surrounding areas shunned the tailed people, as it was believed that they practised magic and were in league with the devil. Falck was unable to verify these claims, yet trustingly recorded them in his travel report as long as he remained unable to disprove them.<sup>80</sup> Anders Sparrman, a travelling companion of James Cook and George Forster, also initially saw no reason to be overly sceptical when, in South Africa in the 1780s, he was told by natives that in the expanses of Namibia's deserts there still lived creatures which resembled the European unicorns; indeed, that the solution to the entire unicorn mythology could be found there. Sparrman never got to see the animal which was so passionately described to him, an antelope with a single mighty horn on its head; yet as he emphasised in his journal of 1783, he did not want to simply brush aside the possibility of its existence, which would have fitted so neatly into the medieval traditions.<sup>81</sup> Nobody knew if the reports might not be ultimately verifiable after all.<sup>82</sup>

### III.2 *Marginalia of Verification: The Extrasensory*

Mermaids and possibly even unicorns could thus be placed in interim storage in the reservoir of a footnote. But what did Linné believe should occur with those phenomena which one would today describe as extrasensory, but whose authenticity Linné would equally not have doubted? In 1765, Linné completed the first draft of what is certainly his strangest

<sup>80</sup> Falck Johann Peter, *Beyträge zur Topographischen Kenntniß des Rußischen Reich*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, Kayserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften: 1785–86) vol. 3, Sechste Abtheilung, 525. A report on this same people is provided by the following author without his ever having seen them; Rytschkow Pjotr Iwanowitsch, *Топография Оренбургской губернии*, eds. Kutschumowa I.W. – Schakurowa F.A. (Ufa: 1999) part 2, c. 1, 190, translated into German as Rytschkow P., *Orenburgische Topographie oder ausführliche Beschreibung des Gouvernements Orenburg 1762* (Leipzig – Weimar: 1983) part 2, c. 1, 158.

<sup>81</sup> Sparrman Anders, *Resa till Goda Hopps-Udden, Södra Pol-kretsen och Omkring Jordklotet, samt till Hottentott- och Caffer-Landen, Åren 1772–1776: Förste Delen* (Stockholm, Anders Nordström: 1783) January 1776, 550–553, translated into German as Sparrman Anders, *Reise nach dem Vorgebirge der guten Hoffnung, den südlichen Polarländern und um die Welt, hauptsächlich aber in den Ländern der Hottentotten und Kaffern in den Jahren 1772 bis 1776*, loosely translated from the Swedish by Großkurt Christian Heinrich, ed. Forster G. (Berlin, Haude und Spener: 1784) ch. XI, 453–457.

<sup>82</sup> A final report was heard by the English traveller Samuel Turner, when he was a guest of the Raja of Bhutan and was told by the talkative ruler that a unicorn was kept near Tassudon which was the last of its kind and which was revered religiously by the populace; yet Turner did not manage to see the beast. See Turner Samuel, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet* (London, Bulmer: 1800) part I, c. 8, 157.

work, the *Nemesis divina*, on which he would continue to work until 1775. He never published this notorious tract, which was dedicated to his son, even though it could certainly be read as a complement to others of his works, such as his *Diaeta naturalis* from 1733, and contains ideas to which Linné gave public expression during funeral speeches for his colleagues, or which can be found in other texts left by him in manuscript form.<sup>83</sup> Simply put, the aim of the entire work was to verify morality empirically as an extensive principle of guilt and atonement, and for this purpose to create a register of examples. Every sin, every act of adultery, every act of faithlessness, every murder, would at some point rebound back upon the perpetrator. A world-immanent causality of evil, an economy of redress which could be placed beside the natural order and its economy so often invoked by Linné, ensured that no sin went unpunished.<sup>84</sup> Linné records the demise of the great political heroes, as well as listing with relish the transgressions of his fellow professors and the many forms of their failings, including a tally of the punishments visited on them for their adulteries, blasphemies, and false oaths. No instance of misconduct went unrecorded in order to bring the golden scale, affected by even the slightest transgression, back into true balance.

In this register of psychological realities, monitored by Linné himself and permeated with an invisible interweaving of causalities, and in many ways resembling his fellow countryman Swedenborg's theory of corre-

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<sup>83</sup> As an example of one of Linné's funeral speeches, see "Linnés parentation över Anders Neander", ed. Malmström E., in: *Svenska Linnésällskapets-Årsskrift* (1925) 97–118, (1926) 45–60. Linné provides a short and very pithy summary of his universal *lex talionis*, composed in his characteristic amalgam of Latin and Swedish, in one of his other treatises; see Linné Carl von, "Frågor rörande tro, moral och samhällsliv". Ett Linnémanuskript med kommentarer", ed. Malmström E., in: *Svenska Linnésällskapets-Årsskrift* (1939), 59–76, Text 60–67.

<sup>84</sup> An introduction to the themes of *Nemesis divina* and their relation to other of Linné's writings is provided e.g. by Wikman K.R.V., *Lachesis and Nemesis: Four Chapters on the Human Condition in the Writings of Carl Linnaeus* (Stockholm: 1970) 24–123, in the English edition, Linné Carl von, *Nemesis divina*, ed. and trans. Petry M.J. (Dordrecht: 2001), Petry's introduction 25–80, and in the postscript by W. Lepenies and L. Gustafsson in the German edition, published after the Swedish edition: Carl von Linné, *Nemesis divina* (Frankfurt – Berlin: 1983) 293–358, expanded as Lepenies W., "Linnaeus's *Nemesis divina* and the Idea of Retaliation in the Eighteenth Century", in: Weinstock, J. (ed.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Linnaeus* (Boston: 1985) 85–115, and Gustafsson L., "Linnaeus and his *Nemesis divina* from a Philosophical Perspective", in Weinstock, *Contemporary Perspectives* 117–134. The extent to which the *Nemesis divina* is rooted in Swedish folklore has previously been emphasised with numerous examples by Ehnmark E., "Linnés Nemesis-tankar och svensk folktro", *Svenska Linnésällskapets-Årsskrift* (1941) 29–63, who also, however, 31–34, correctly cites Linné's reading of Leibniz as a further potential source of influence.



spondence, a space was provided for the occurrences described by Linné in his travel reports and whose nature he had there left open.<sup>85</sup> It was precisely what Linné himself would have termed experience-centeredness and the primacy of observation – in other words, his impartiality – which forced him to now accord these phenomena an appropriate status. Here one could once more encounter, albeit in a different form, Linné's fear of the dead and of burial grounds, the great uneasiness which came over him off Öland and the island of Blåkulla, which he would have been better off granting its purged name of *Blå Jungfru*, or Blue Virgin, and the strange theories of the healer Ingeborg.<sup>86</sup>

Under the rubric of 'Fascinum', of magic, Linné now openly admits that a maidservant could heal a horse with her own urine.<sup>87</sup> When he comes to speak of omens, he reports that the death of his father-in-law was pre-saged by the sounds of a coffin being nailed shut, heard by two women in the adjoining room. On the same day that the daughter of his colleague Dahlmann dies, the sounds of something shaking her bed are heard at twelve o'clock, the exact time at which the girl passes away. In 1728, when Linné was still a child, something knocks against the outside of the window three times on the top floor of his father's house. Linné fears for his life; instead, a man and his mother die that same night in the neighbouring house.<sup>88</sup> Linné recounts similar occurrences in the rubric 'Spöka', or apparitions.<sup>89</sup> In 1773, his maid Hierpe wishes to travel to see her dying mother in the village of Myrsjö, which had been visited by a plague, the *rötfeber*. Despite being warned several times against going, she sets off;

<sup>85</sup> On the system of universal analogy in the theories of Swedenborg, whose connections to Linné have not gone unnoticed in the literature, see e.g. Jonsson I., *Swedenborgs Korrespondenslära* (Stockholm: 1969) 136–172; Siukonen J., *Emanuel Swedenborg. Clavis Hieroglyphica. Hieroglyfinen avain ja muita filosofisia tekstejä* (Helsinki: 2000) 140–178, and now Stengel F., *Aufklärung bis zum Himmel. Emanuel Swedenborg im Kontext der Theologie und Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 2011) 199–207.

<sup>86</sup> A synopsis of the phenomena of ghost sightings, magic, and folkloric beliefs recorded in the final chapters of the *Lachesis divina* is provided with reference to the *Nemesis divina* by Wikman, *Lachesis*, 57–72. The majority of this section of the *Lachesis* still remains unedited. On the lemmata, see also Lindfors A.O., *Linnés Dietetik på grundvalen af dels hans eget originalutkast till föreläsningar: Lachesis naturalis quae tradit dietam naturalem* (Uppsala: 1907) 167.

<sup>87</sup> Linné Carl von, *Nemesis divina*, eds. Malmeström E. – Fredbärj T. (Stockholm: 1968), Fascinum, 66, in German as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Fascinum, 79 ff., in English as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Spellbinding, 105 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Manes, 75 ff., in German as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Manes, 92 ff., in English as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Shades, 104 ff., Commentary, 249 ff.

<sup>89</sup> For a brief outline of apparition-like phenomena in the *Lachesis* manuscript too, see Wikman, "Superstitionerna", Text, No. 114, 36.

immediately upon the death of the maid's mother, an apparition is seen in the hallway of the house. When the maid herself falls victim to the plague and dies far away from home, the servants hear her crying in the kitchen. There is more. When Linné's own mother passed away, the young Linné, who knew nothing of her illness, is overcome by a heavy melancholy for which he can find no explanation. His father sees a man swathed in a white sheet sitting in the hearth. The death of his daughter Helena, who passes away shortly after her birth, is presaged eight days beforehand by a light which seems to fill the entire house of the Linné family.<sup>90</sup>

What was at the bottom of these occurrences, these inexplicable fears and visions? As Linné emphasised, every person had a twofold shadow which was orientated towards God and in whose acts the person's virtue and fortune could be expressed. One could call this shadow the person's guardian angel, whose task it was to use the means of the natural order to guard the person against evil; yet, Linné stated, this potency was ultimately not amenable to unambiguous theological attributions. Maybe it lay in the order of nature itself.<sup>91</sup> Only the material world could be classed as fully comprehensible; the spirit world could in itself only be apprehended through its effects on the physical realm. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt as to its existence, as Linné emphasized; its consequences could be examined in the same manner as the movements of an animal which were caused by its disembodied spirit.<sup>92</sup> Thus even the spirit world had its empiricism.

#### IV. Conclusion: Objectivity as the Intrinsic Right of Experience

The fact that Linné was a child of his era as far as his belief in ghosts is concerned, and that he exceeded many of his contemporaries in terms of his susceptibility to the supernatural, is not anything new in itself. It is more important to note that Linné's tendency towards deliberately allowing some matters to retain their ambiguity, and his inclination to

<sup>90</sup> Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Spöka, 99 ff., in German as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Spuk, 120–122, in English as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Haunting, 103 ff., Commentary, 247 ff.

<sup>91</sup> Linné had no doubts regarding his God-elected good fortune and the special nature of fate in his life; for this, see Linné Carl von, *Vita Caroli Linnaei – Carl von Linnés Självbiografier*, eds. Malmström E. – Uggla A. Hj. (Stockholm: 1957) Vita III, 145.

<sup>92</sup> Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Praesagia, 94, in German as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Praesagia, 114 ff., in English as Linné, *Nemesis divina*, Portent, 112 ff., Commentary, 261 ff.



not only grant his fears space but also to turn them in effect into objects themselves, are as much products of his scientific world-view as his work on his taxonomy, and could be justified on the basis of that taxonomy. With Linné as the guiding star, the maxims of experience and personal observation as manifested in the numerous journeys of discovery were able not only to acquire validity as guiding categories, but also establish themselves as binding principles. It is in particular the Linnéan disciplines of zoology, botany, and anthropology, which strove to unlock the world in its spatial extent as well as its hierarchical levels of existence, that of necessity had the principle of observation at their centre. Yet for Linné, objectivity and experience shared a fraternal relationship; as Linné was able to make clear in his disputations, both had to mutually correct and complement one another. As we have been able to trace, this had two important consequences for Linné: firstly, no investigator of nature should commit the error of allowing criticism of interpretive constructions to erode experiential reality. Empiricism demanded its intrinsic right; things possessed the privilege of being able to speak for themselves. Secondly, objectivity meant accepting as potential sources of authority the experiences of other people as well, including those who were perhaps separated from the present through the resonating space of history, or to whom a supposedly enlightened attitude of mind would not have seemed plausible; it meant accepting their perception of truth and not being too quick to criticise them. As long as no one was able to conclusively disprove the existence of unicorns, poltergeists, or pneumatic astral bodies, there was no reason to reproach a bushman or a southern Swedish peasant woman for their ignorance and to cast doubt upon their statements without having first examined them. The great Uppsala-based scholar was not alone in this attitude: Linné's correspondent, the Scottish philosopher James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, to whom Linné had sent a copy of Nils Köping's dubious travel journal,<sup>93</sup> was in his highly diverse work prepared to grant scientific credibility to the most unlikely accounts both antique and modern to an almost bizarre degree, particularly if they appeared in travel reports. The foundation for his uncritical and impartial attitude was formed by empiricism, as Monboddo made clear; an experience which

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<sup>93</sup> Burnett James, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, J. Balfour and T. Cadell: 1773–1792) (reprinted Hildesheim – New York: 1974) vol. 1, part I, book II, c. 3, 236 ff.

was objective precisely at the point when it did not question and dissolve in the acid bath of critical analysis those reports imparted to it.<sup>94</sup>

Linné's manifest fear, his willingness to give credence to spirit healers and omens, stemmed from the same fundamental empirical attitude, and from his willingness to allow every transmission of knowledge and each instance of experiential reality to exist in its own right, without in the process levelling them or placing them within a hierarchy. Experience was a repository of treasures which did not have to be fully proven. For Linné, they at least initially had the right to withhold themselves from definition; maybe they even possessed a natural additional value which ultimately was at the command only of God. Even if Linné's approach does not perhaps stand up to today's criteria of objectivity, it has been shown here that this procedure is indebted to a notion of impartiality which sought to practise an observation of its subjects that was free of intention. The scholar had good reason for freeing from the burden of their previous evaluation and impartially recording all those phenomena which Linné noted down in his diaries, disputations, and hand-written catalogues. Yet with that same justification, he also had to keep them free from new premature judgements, even in the case of what we would today term 'parapsychological' events, or of creatures for whose existence there was only semi-verified evidence and which we would today place in the rubric of cryptozoology. In this way, Linné was far more 'modern' than one might suspect. Linné's scrupulous treatment of marginal phenomena, and the fact that he ultimately deemed it appropriate to withhold his *Nemesis divina* from the public, show that Linné did not make this attitude of impartiality easy for himself.

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<sup>94</sup> Burnett James, Lord Monboddo, *Antient Metaphysics*, 6 vols. (London, J. Balfour and T. Cadell: 1779–1799) (reprinted London – New York: 1977) vol. 3, book II, c. 12, 261 ff., 266.

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TRUTH RATHER THAN ELEGANCE  
A PARADOXICAL CASE OF IMPARTIALITY IN ALEXANDER COZENS'S  
*PRINCIPLES OF BEAUTY* (1778)\*

Anja Zimmermann

Impartiality in the visual field is a tricky thing. On the one hand we habitually ascribe to images the power of conveying information or even 'truth' much more efficiently than words. On the other hand we are inclined to believe that images are equivocal. They are deemed to be much more alluring than just words – and therefore thought to eventually deceive the spectator's power of judgement.

In the history of objectivity there is evidence for both convictions. Both ideas coexisted within nineteenth-century discourse on scientific photography. While some scientists strongly advocated the use of photographic techniques to document experimental results and give evidence to their scientific findings, others strongly opposed the use of images in scientific context.<sup>1</sup>

As Daston and Galison have argued, contemporary notions of objectivity are a result of profound conceptual shifts in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> While before the nineteenth century scientific imaging focused on the 'ideal' or 'typical' image, later scientists subordinated their imaging styles to what Daston and Galison call 'mechanical objectivity'.<sup>3</sup> This term implies that images can be best obtained by mechanical means and

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\* The author wishes to thank Hans Schuller for his helpful critical comments.

<sup>1</sup> The Dutch microscopist Pieter Harting, for example, argued in 1886 that photographic images of microscopic objects are 'untrue' because they allegedly seduce and disorient the viewer with too much detail: 'Man hat wohl angenommen, das müssten immer die besten Zeichnungen von mikroskopischen Objekten sein, worin dieselben gerade so dargestellt sind, wie sie sich im Gesichtsfelde zeigen, ohne daß in der Abbildung etwas hinzugethan oder weggelassen wird. Deshalb hat man auch angefangen, die Daguerrotypie und die Photographie für solche Zeichnungen zu verwenden. Die Hoffnung indessen, [...] daß diese Hilfsmittel alle anderen mit der Hand ausgeführten Zeichnungen [...] an Genauigkeit und Treue übertreffen würden, weil die Subjectivität des Beobachters ganz ausgeschlossen ist, muß als eine thörichte betrachtet werden. [...] gerade durch ihre übermäßige Treue sind solche Bilder nicht allein undeutlich, sondern auch unwahr'. Harting P., *Das Mikroskop* (Braunschweig: 1886) 187.

<sup>2</sup> Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (New York: 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Daston L. – Galison P., "The Image of Objectivity", *Representations* 40 (1992) 81–128.

therefore minimize or completely eliminate any subjective influence. Consequently, scientific illustrations today do not show any 'ideal' or 'typical' views of a scientific specimen but deliver an image as far as possible unaffected by the idiosyncrasies of the person who produced it, be it the scientist or an artist working with him or her.

Whereas Daston and Galison understandably focus on science for their history of a concept so closely bound to scientific endeavour as 'objectivity', it is interesting to notice the enormous impact these scientific concepts had on art – and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century visual artists, art critics, and museum professionals were all fascinated by the enormous contemporary advancements in science. For them one way not to fall behind in influence and importance was to attempt to adopt the new scientific ideal of objectivity. The French Realists, for example, openly embraced the notion of the artist as a mere medium by whom reality is recorded – much like the new mechanical devices scientists used to register their experiments.

In the eighteenth century, however, artists did not explicitly situate their work in relation to scientific discourse; or at least, they did it in a way quite different from their later counterparts. This means that before the advent of the term and concept of 'objectivity' the relationship between these fields, art and science, must be described differently too. As I will argue in this paper, eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse discussed problems related to those troubling scientists at the same time. Both artists and scientists were interested in ways of communicating knowledge via images – be it aesthetically or scientifically. But, contrary to the aspiration to an explicitly scientific/objective procedure in the arts in the nineteenth century, artists in the eighteenth century did not label their concepts as scientific or objective.

Instead, as I will try to show, 'impartiality' played an important role in eighteenth-century aesthetic endeavours. Artists and scientists were united in their anxiety to provide images that enabled the *spectator* to judge impartially. For both scientists and artists alike, the image took centre stage in a discourse that centred on questions of how to impart knowledge and how to encourage the observer to abandon his (mostly) or her (rarely) affections, and become impartial.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Zimmermann A., *Ästhetik der Objektivität. Genese und Funktion eines wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Stils im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld: 2009).

*'Uncharactered and Unimpassioned':  
Impartiality between Science and Art*

For more than a hundred years after its first publication in 1778, the interested reader could buy a book entitled *Principles of Beauty Relative to the Human Head*. Its author was Alexander Cozens, an English artist most renowned for his landscape watercolours. Today, the *Principles of Beauty* is a largely forgotten part of Cozens's work. Modern art history is much more interested in his other important theoretical contribution to art, the *New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* which was published a few years later in 1785/86.<sup>5</sup> In this later work Cozens gave a detailed account of a procedure he considered to be of major help for landscape painters, the so called 'blot'-technique, in which artists had to place ink blots on the paper and use these abstract compositions as a basis and starting point for landscape painting. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries these blots with their decidedly modern impression seemed much more interesting than Cozens's search for 'absolute beauty'. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the *Principles* were well received.

The work is a compendium consisting of a brief introduction on the nature of beauty and – as its core – nineteen engravings by Francesco Bartolozzi depicting female portraits in profile 'as large as life' [Fig. 1].<sup>6</sup> The author's intention was to allow a better understanding of what it is that makes a beautiful face beautiful, or in Cozens's words, 'to show by what means simple beauty of the human face [...] may be formed'.<sup>7</sup> The reader could learn about the principles of beauty by looking at the portraits of beautiful heads and additionally use so-called 'tables of the combination of features [...] and composing faces'<sup>8</sup> [Fig. 2]. As a visual toolbox this 'collection of principle variations of the human features' provided a selection of meticulously enumerated body parts. The student of beauty could for example combine a forehead from the fourth variation ('curved inward and outward') with a nose from the ninth variation ('straight, and in comparison with Variation 5th, the nostril ascending a little more obliquely

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Busch W., "Alexander Cozens' 'blot'-Methode. Landschaftserfindung als Naturwissenschaft", in Wunderlich H. (ed.), *"Landschaft" und Landschaften im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: 1995) 209–228.

<sup>6</sup> Cozens Alexander, *Principles of Beauty Relative to the Human Head* (London, James Dixwell: 1778) 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

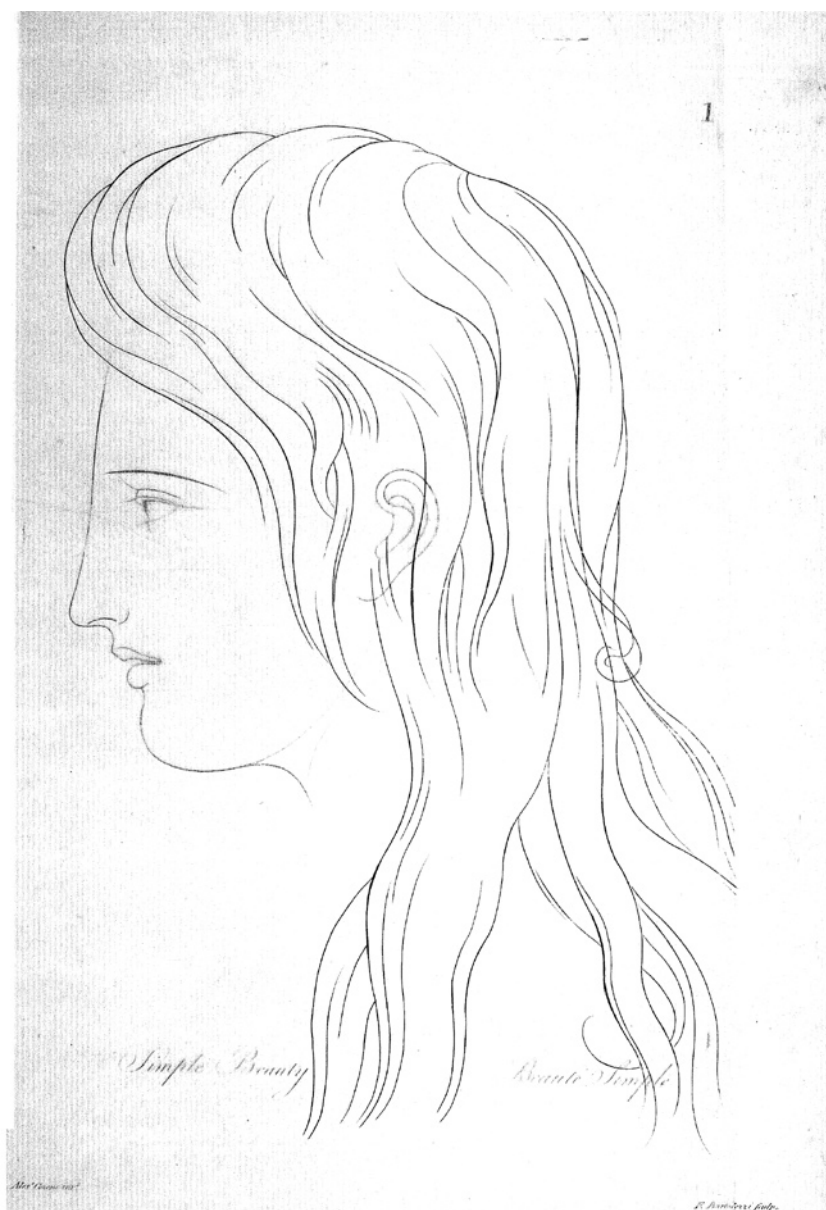


Fig. 1. Alexander Cozens, *Simple Beauty*, illustration from *Principles of Beauty*, 1778.



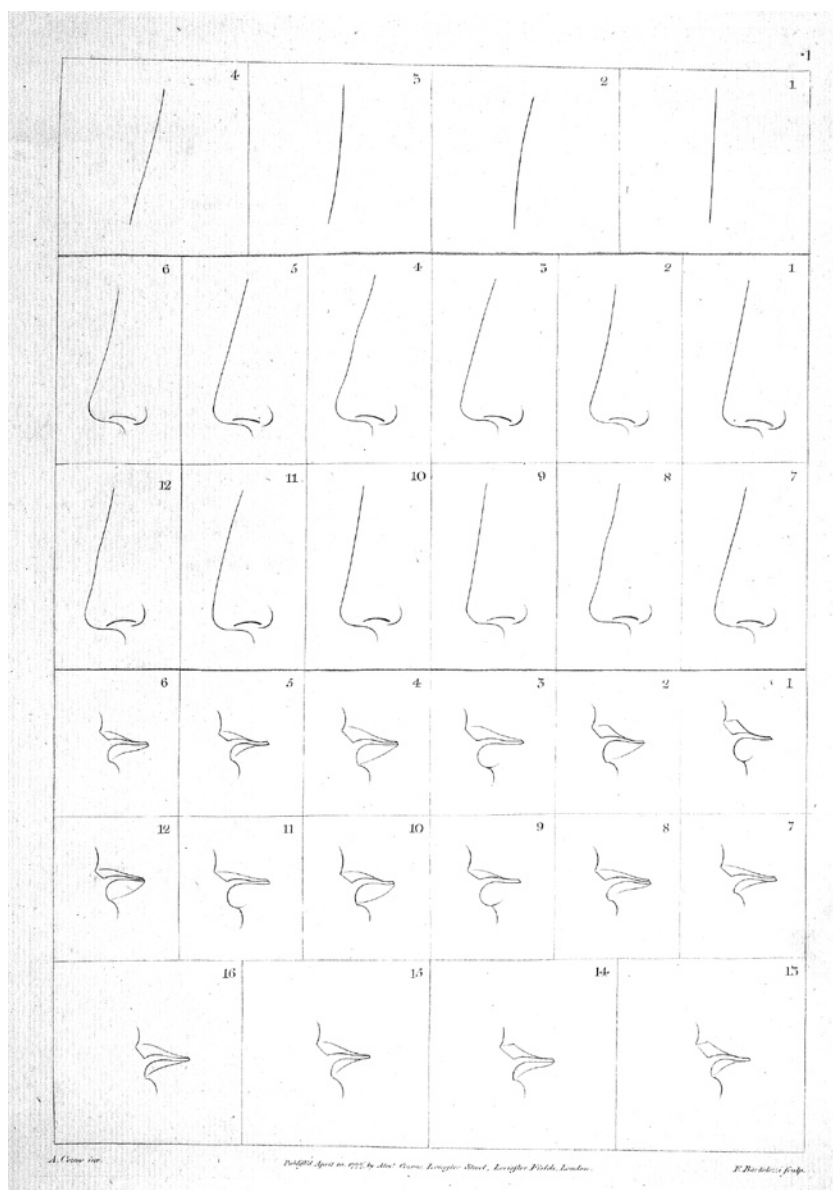


Fig. 2. Alexander Cozens, "Combinations of Features [...] ready for the use of composing faces", illustration from *Principles of Beauty*, 1778.

from the ridge of the nose') and a mouth of the third variation ('Upper lip projecting. Thick lips. Upper lip ending at the corner of the mouth. Under lip ending toward the middle of the mouth'), etc.

A special feature were the 'suitable dresses of the hair [...] printed on transparent paper' which could be 'laid over the faces as to produce the most proper effect'.<sup>9</sup> Readers were free to experiment with the 'suitable dresses of hair' and combine different heads with different hairstyles according to their whim [Fig. 3]. Cozens followed the prevailing view that the 'hair of the head, which encompasses a face as a frame doth a picture, and contrasts with its uniform colour, the variegated inclosed composition, adding more or less beauty thereto, according as it is disposed by the rules of art', as William Hogarth put it in the *Analysis of Beauty* (1753).<sup>10</sup> The notion of the hair as a frame to the face implies two things: first, that the face is subject to the same assessment criteria as a picture; and second, that to look at a beautiful face is essentially the same as looking at an artwork.

Indeed, Cozens's intention was not to present a repertory of beautiful women but a principle that could be applied to the arts. Given the fact that 'the world [is] in doubt and dispute whether or not there is such a thing in existence as a face of simple and absolute beauty',<sup>11</sup> anything else would have been futile. Cozens's 'doctrine therefore is that a set of features may be combined by a regular and determinate process in art, producing simple beauty, uncharactered and unimpassioned'.<sup>12</sup> The aim of this process, which appears rather mechanical, is to promote visual literacy among 'lovers of art' as well as 'practitioners', i.e. artists.<sup>13</sup> They are to learn to discern 'real' or 'simple' beauty whenever they come across it and be able to create images according to the principle of beauty.

Cozens proceeds in several steps he wants his readers to follow closely. After looking at the 'collection of the human features, separately taken [...] as large as life' [Fig. 1] readers can go on and select anatomical details from the 'tables of the combinations of features [...] ready for the use of composing faces' [Fig. 2]. The final step consists of familiarizing oneself

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem 6.

<sup>10</sup> Hogarth, William, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. R. Paulson (New Haven: 1997) 101.

<sup>11</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem 1.

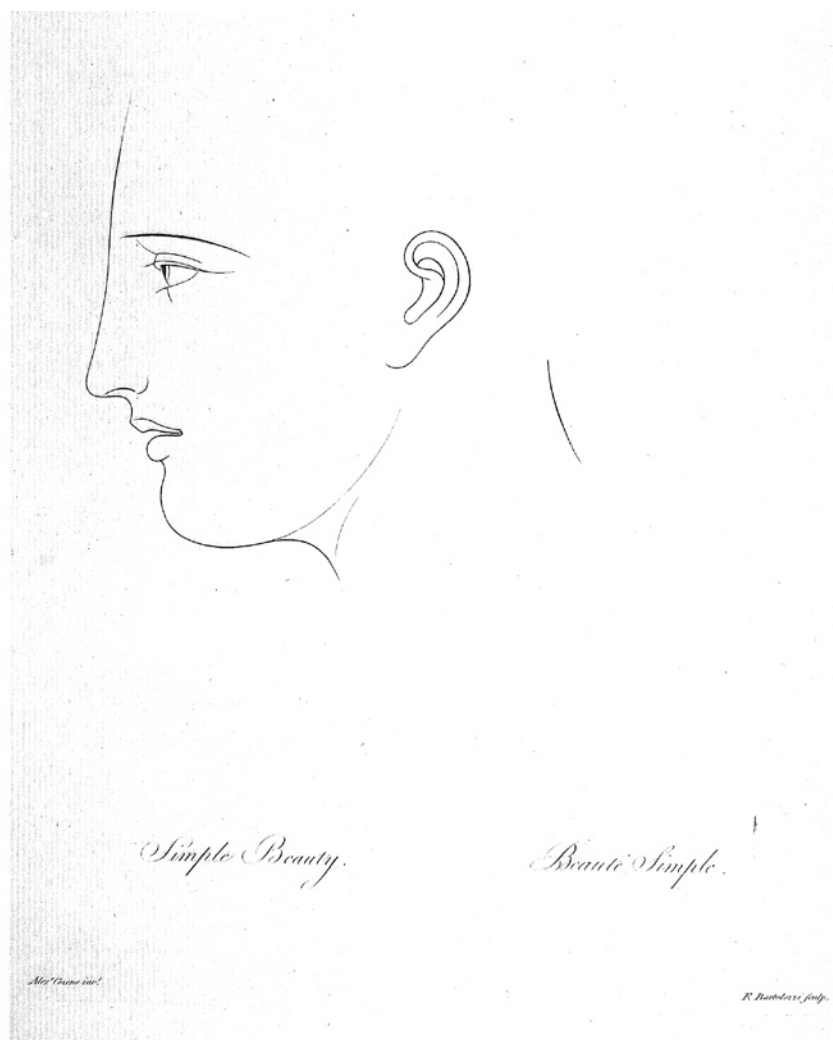


Fig. 3. Alexander Cozens, *Simple Beauty*, illustration from *Principles of Beauty* printed on transparent paper, 1778.

with examples 'of a face in profile [...] wherein are selected those features which are expressive of simple beauty' or 'charactered beauty'.<sup>14</sup>

The 'charactered beauties' which Cozens mentions are a complex case. On the one hand Cozens stresses that 'the passions are by no means under my contemplation at present'.<sup>15</sup> By this, the author wants to set his project against the discipline of physiognomy and the long tradition of visualising the passions, specifically against the widely known writings of Charles Le Brun (*Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions*, 1698) and Johann-Kaspar Lavater (*Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, 1775–1778). On the other hand, Cozens nevertheless felt compelled to include sixteen 'species of human character' ranging from 'Majestic', 'Spirited', 'Melancholy' to 'Timid' and 'Artful',<sup>16</sup> and thereby paradoxically reintroduced a topic that could be easily confused with the passions.

In an English edition of Charles Le Brun's treatise, one of the illustrations shows three human heads, in profile and *en face*. A grid of horizontal lines is intended to enable the viewer to compare the proportions of eyes, nose, forehead, etc. [Fig. 4]. The image not only bears a striking similarity to Cozens's first illustration devoted to 'simple beauty' [Fig. 1], but occupies a comparable position in regard to the overall visual argumentation. Like Cozens, who sees 'simple beauty' as a basic form of beauty out of which the 'charactered beauties' evolve, Le Brun's first illustration shows a human face devoid of all passions that he described with the word 'tranquility'.

For Le Brun the tranquil face is the starting point of a series of visual transformations caused by the passions. For Cozens 'simple beauty' is the starting point for variations of beauty, a process which he compares to mixing different liquids: 'As water may be mixed with wine [...] in the same glass; so beauty with the expression of majesty [...] may be combined in the same face'.<sup>17</sup> But while Le Brun's illustrations – or any of the later illustrated surveys of the passions during the nineteenth century<sup>18</sup> – presented visually intriguing material of dramatic mimic

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem 7.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. the lavishly illustrated physiognomic study *Mécanisme de la physiologie humaine* (1862) by the French neurologist Duchenne de Boulogne. Cf. Zimmer-

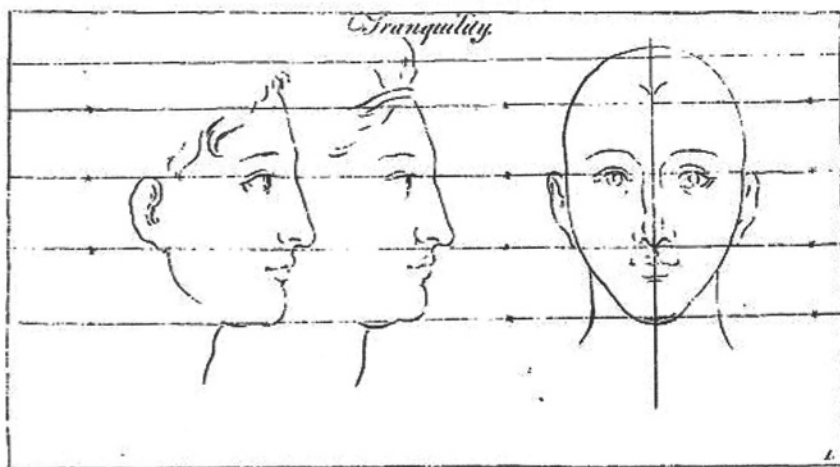


Fig. 4. Charles Le Brun, *Tranquility*, 1734 [1698].

variations, Cozens's array of 'charactered beauties' is striking primarily because they are almost indistinguishable.

On the one hand this is due to the fact that beauty is claimed to be absolute: beauty is unique, while aberrations, deviations, or deformations are countless. The repertory of ugliness is much more varied than that of beauty, or as Cozens puts it: 'there are more degrees of deformity than of beauty, as there are a greater number of irregular forms than regular'.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand Cozens claims to be able to demonstrate *variations*, or in his term, 'various branches of compound beauty' and he therefore needs to present to the reader faces in which he or she is able to detect these differences.<sup>20</sup>

Actually, the variations between the 'Timid' and the 'Majestic' [Fig. 5], or of the 'Artful' [Fig. 6] and the 'Delicate', are not easy to discern. A cursory glance might even give the impression that all the portraits show the same person. It is therefore all the more important to equip the viewer with appropriate instructions as to how to achieve an unbiased judgement on the beauty of the portrayed. While we are used to the notion that

mann A., "Hände – Künstler, Wissenschaftler und Medien in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts", in Fleckner U. et al. (eds.), *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus* 8 (Berlin: 2004) 135–166, and cf. below.

<sup>19</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem 3.



Fig. 5. Alexander Cozens, *The Majestic*, illustration from *Principles of Beauty*, 1778.



Fig. 6. Alexander Cozens, *The Artful*, illustration from *Principles of Beauty*, 1778.



matters of beauty are a rather obscure field in which to look for impartial judgement, for eighteenth-century readers Cozens's venture was more obvious.<sup>21</sup> Questions about the nature of beauty and its principles were frequently discussed in eighteenth-century British aesthetics, and Cozens was certainly familiar with the writings of e.g. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, or Burke, all of whom made important contributions to the topic in question.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the idea of the 'disinterested spectator' permeated eighteenth-century aesthetics, thereby establishing a strong tie between aesthetic judgement and impartiality. Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), for example, has rightly been characterized as part of a widespread quest for 'aesthetic objectivity'.<sup>23</sup>

Cozens's project, however, takes a special role in eighteenth-century aesthetics and especially in eighteenth-century discussions of beauty. The eighteenth century has been considered as 'the great watershed in the history of "beauty"'.<sup>24</sup> During this century some fundamental keystones of earlier definitions of beauty eroded: the notion changed from being a key concept of aesthetic theory to a side note of aesthetic thinking. Most interesting in this context is that thinkers were less and less convinced of the existence of something like a 'formula of objective beauty'.<sup>25</sup> Archibald Alison, author of the *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), only referred to 'principles' in the title of his study. In the book itself, however, there are numerous places in which Alison expressed his deep conceptual distance from the idea of a 'principle' of beauty: 'To reduce the great variety of instances of Beauty', Alison suggests, 'seems at first sight impossible'.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, all previous attempts to find such a principle are criticized by Alison as 'a partial view of the subject'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Stolnitz J. "Beauty: Some Stages in the History of an Idea", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961) 185–204.

<sup>22</sup> Hipple W.J. Jr., *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale, IL: 1957); Cohen R. (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics* (Berkeley: 1985); Godel R. (ed.), *Shaftesbury* (Hamburg: 2010); Kivy P., *The Seventh Sense: A Study of Francis Hutcheson's Aesthetics and its Influence in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: 1976).

<sup>23</sup> Cohen R., "Introduction", in Cohen R. (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics* (Berkeley: 1985) 1–16.

<sup>24</sup> Stolnitz, "Beauty" 186.

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, "Introduction" 8.

<sup>26</sup> Alison Archibald, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Dublin, P. Byrne et al.: 1790) 203.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.



Regarding this 'collapse of the formulas',<sup>28</sup> i.e. the downfall of all attempts to determine universal qualities of beauty, Cozens's project appears to be intellectually belated. At a moment when nearly all eminent thinkers began to be sceptical towards the possibility of finding an universal system or principle of beauty, Cozens presented precisely such a principle. However, if one takes a closer look, Cozens's project is more or less in accordance with his contemporaries on two levels. First, the scepticism toward formulas and principles of beauty did not necessarily prevent those very skeptics from presenting *new* principles anyway. Alison, for example, put the contested term ('principle') not only in his book's title, but also deliberately stated that he 'endeavoured to illustrate' a 'principle [...] with regard to the Beauty and Sublimity'.<sup>29</sup> What eroded this aim from within was the fact that Alison, like others who wrote about the subject, shifted the focus from qualities in a given object to the (necessarily subjective) response of the recipient, or as Alison put it, '[...] the Sublimity or Beauty of Forms arises altogether from the Associations we connect with them, or the Qualities of which they are expressive to us'.<sup>30</sup>

That leads to the second aspect: Cozens's project also depends on a spectator, i.e. someone who – in Cozens's words – is 'uncharactered and unimpassioned'. Even if the observer Cozens has in mind is rather different from the one Alison envisions, both categorically acknowledge the dependence on someone who is to perceive the beautiful before being able to judge on beauty. While for Alison, the perceiver is essentially free to make unpredictable and unhampered associations, thus offering a reason for the lack of a 'permanent form of Beauty' which becomes instead a 'disagreement of different ages and nations in the Beauty of Forms',<sup>31</sup> Cozens assumes an unhistorical, ideal observer.

Alison's concept therefore correlates with our modern understanding of an 'impartial' view on the subject of beauty because it allows a form of culturally and aesthetically unbiased judgement of what is considered to be beautiful. In contrast, Cozens's proposal of codifying a distinct and immutable principle of beauty seems to be very partisan. Indeed, it could be registered as an example of a very partial view on beauty: strictly confined to the ideals of antiquity.

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<sup>28</sup> Stolnitz, "Beauty" 202.

<sup>29</sup> Alison, *Essays* 204.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem* 232.

But, as I would like to argue, this rather paradoxical condition shows that in the context of aesthetic theory and artistic practice the notion of an 'ideal observer' was tightly knotted with a bundle of other concepts closely related to impartiality: e.g. an observer led by an assumedly impartial 'eye' (vs. the necessarily partial 'heart')<sup>32</sup> and observers who are unaffected by 'their own humours and predilections' as Cozens later explains.<sup>33</sup> For him, images provided the means by which a viewer could be led into using his 'eye' – and not his 'heart'. Illustrations were therefore the point of reference for elaborating a concept of visual judgement based on a notion of impartiality which was to enable readers to become 'observers [... who do] decide from the eye [and not] from the feelings or dispositions of the heart'.<sup>34</sup>

But what were the necessary preconditions for deciding with the eye? Cozens's approach differs from other important contributions on the subject of beauty during the eighteenth century in the great emphasis he puts on the visual. In opposition to authors like Hogarth or Burke, Cozens conveys the great importance of illustrations. For him an image of a beautiful head is much more apt to clarify his principle than a mere description:

But, as I am apprehensive that some of the principles [...] cannot but be very obscurely communicated by words, it will be found that this defect is obviated by the examples, which being objects of sight, are best adapted not only to illustrate but also to demonstrate the abstruser principles.<sup>35</sup>

The distinction Cozens draws between 'illustrate' and 'demonstrate' is quite important. It not only signals that the images are the *raison d'être* but also refers to a specific epistemological interest. Not unlike contemporary authors of scientific atlases, Cozens was deeply convinced that images were indispensable and a key to convincing his readers successfully. Not only did the illustrations provide more information than words but another type of information altogether. They were the actual means by which readers could get familiar with the principle Cozens was sure he had uncovered. Without them there simply was no principle.

This interest in the epistemological power of images therefore creates a surprisingly close relation between the *Principles of Beauty* and con-

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<sup>32</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem 1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem 2–3.

temporary science. The British anatomist William Hunter, famous for his *Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus* (1774), a lavishly illustrated obstetrical atlas, also put images at the centre of consideration. For him they spoke an 'universal language' because they allowed for an 'an immediate comprehension of what [they] represent'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Cozens and Hunter also referred to the truth of the image. For Hunter the life-sized illustrations of the human gravid uterus carried 'the mark of truth',<sup>37</sup> while Cozens explicitly stressed that 'it is truth rather than elegance [...] which I wish to convey with my system'.<sup>38</sup>

That Cozens chose to visualize beauty via female heads shown in profile and not *en face* is also significant in this context. In Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775), a special mimetic power was attributed to the portrait in profile, which the author praised as 'das wahrste und getreuste Bild, das es von einem Menschen geben kann [emphasis mine]' [Fig. 7]. It was the silhouette in particular that Lavater appreciated as 'unmittelbarer Abdruck der Natur' meaning that the artist's subjectivity did not interfere with the impartial procedure of taking someone's silhouette.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to that, the illustrations in Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* function differently and were used to a different end. *The Analysis of Beauty* was accompanied by 'two explanatory prints' [Fig. 8].<sup>40</sup> According to Hogarth, their function was to *explain* the written argument rather than *being* an argument in itself (as for example Hunter had in mind for the illustrations of the *Anatomy* or Cozens for the *Principles*). The two prints, which were sold separately, were described by Hogarth as follows: 'a Country Dance, and a Statuary's Yard: that these will accompany'd with a great Variety of Figures, tending to illustrate the new System contained therein'.<sup>41</sup> Plate 1 [Fig. 8] shows the sculptor's yard mentioned by Hogarth. Like plate 2, it is organized around a main scene, which is outlined by smaller compartments showing schematic drawings, details of a draperies, or illustrating

<sup>36</sup> Hunter William, *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, Exhibited in Figures* (Birmingham, John Baskerville: 1774) unpaginated. Cf. Jordanova L., *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: 1989).

<sup>37</sup> Hunter, *Anatomy* unpaginated.

<sup>38</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 2.

<sup>39</sup> Crawford J.S., "Physiognomy in Classical and American Portrait Busts", *The American Art Journal* 9/1 (1977) 49–60.

<sup>40</sup> Hogarth, *Analysis* 17.

<sup>41</sup> *General Advertiser* (16 November 1752), cf. Paulson R., "Introduction", in Hogarth, *Analysis* xvii.

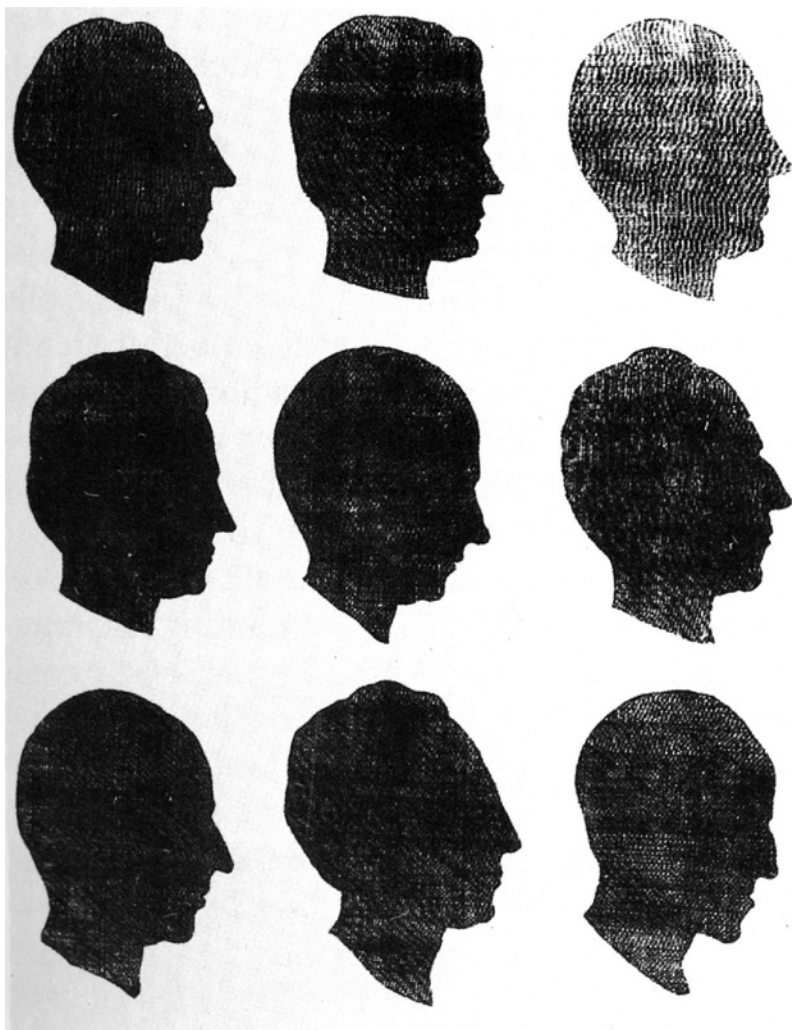


Fig. 7. Johann-Kaspar Lavater, illustration from *Essays on Physiognomy: For the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, 1794.

the aesthetically sobering effect of a figure which 'is totally divested of all lines of elegance' [Fig. 9].<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Hogarth, *Analysis* 95.

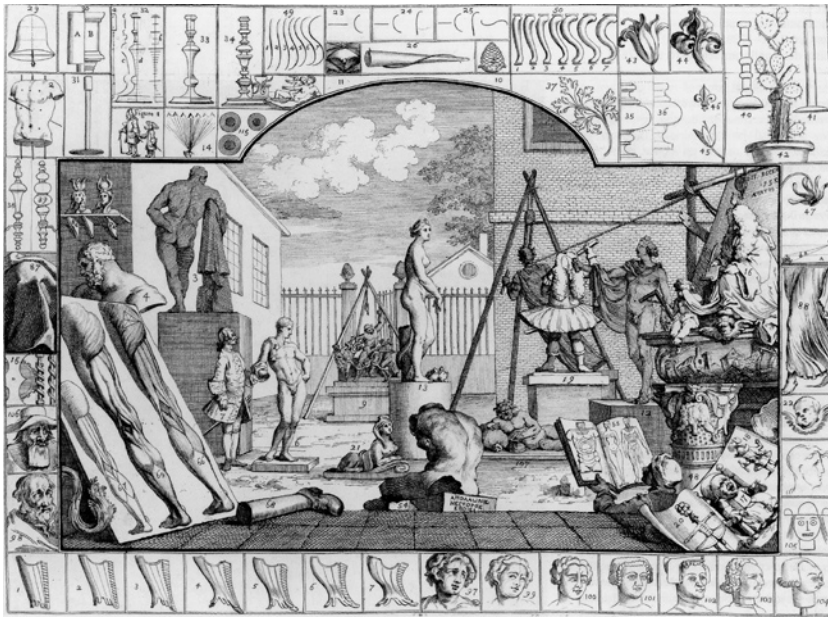


Fig. 8. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, 1753.



Fig. 9. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, 1753, Detail.

Compared to the plates of Cozens's *Principles of Beauty*, they employ a very different way of visually organizing the information they wish to convey. While Cozens attaches great importance to the clear arrangement of visual information, Hogarth's illustrations are organized and numbered rather confusingly, thereby considerably challenging the viewer's ability to orient him- or herself. Indeed, the illustrations attracted a good part of the scathing criticism the work came in for. In a caricature of 1754 by Paul Sandby, Hogarth is depicted in a state of madness [Fig. 10]. Chained by a chain shaped in the form of the line of beauty, the artist stands in front of a wall completely covered with scribbles. The individual scrawls are numbered in random order. Hogarth's system of references between text and



Fig. 10. Paul Sandby, *The Author Run Mad*, 1754.

image is ridiculed and seems to be the result of a completely disordered mind. It is telling that the madness ascribed to Hogarth is visualized by the chaotic arrangement of images – in their confusing composition they are not good for explaining anything but the alleged confusion of Hogarth's theory. Another caricature by the same artist [Fig. 11] works within the same pattern. The visual schema Hogarth employed to illustrate his concept of the 'line of beauty' has become the layout of a studio scene. We are able to take a look into Hogarth's supposed studio, complete with three Graces posing for the master. But these models are grotesquely deformed, echoing and ridiculing once again Hogarth's idea of the line of beauty.

Nevertheless, there is one important point where Hogarth and Cozens agree: the importance of impartiality. Taking this into consideration, it is striking to read the introduction to *The Analysis of Beauty*. Hogarth outlines in many passages of the text the importance of an unbiased perception of beauty. He specifically submits his work to those 'whose judgments are unprejudiced'<sup>43</sup> and those 'who have no bias of any kind'.<sup>44</sup>

Accordingly, Cozens's systematic approach to beauty was considered to be scientific. As was noted in a book review in 1778, 'Mr Cozens [...] means to describe scientifically those discoveries he has made'.<sup>45</sup> But what qualified Cozens project as scientific? And how did labeling *Principles of Beauty* as scientific relate to the concept of impartiality?

I argue that it was again the images that played a pivotal role in this context. Their visual style suggested to Cozens's contemporaries the fact that his findings were to be categorized as scientific. Cozens emphasized that he 'purposely rejected every collateral assistance that might recommend the drawings [...] to a common eye such as shading, softness, free-drawing &c'.<sup>46</sup> It was by this visual means that he hoped to 'approach something like mathematical precision'. Actually, it was this 'mathematical precision' which seemed to impress contemporary readers the most. While even the supporters of Hogarth's theories did not especially situate it in relation to concepts of science, Cozens's illustrations were praised for binding the 'changeable phantom [i.e. beauty] to invariable Figures' and

<sup>43</sup> Hogarth, *Analysis* 18.

<sup>44</sup> Hogarth, *Analysis* 20.

<sup>45</sup> *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, From January to June, vol. LVIII (London, R. Griffiths: 1778) 444.

<sup>46</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 6.



Fig. 11. Paul Sandby, *Puggs Graces Etched from his Original Daubing*, 1754.

for conjuring up 'the Spirit, thin though it be, into Lines of Mathematical Exactness'.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Shanahan Roger, *The Exhibition, or a second anticipation: being Remarks on the principal works to be Exhibited next month, at the Royal Academy* (London, Richardson and Urquhart: [c. 1779]) 95. In aesthetic theory it was not uncommon to bring together mathematics and beauty. Indeed, the author of the passage just cited referred to Joshua Reynolds, then President of the Royal Academy, who emphasized that truth is a category applicable to science as well as to art: 'We may let pass those things which are at once subjects of taste and sense, and which having as much certainty as the senses themselves, give no occasion to inquiry or dispute. The natural appetite or taste of the human mind is



Besides this, Cozens' alliance of a certain visual style (no 'shading, softness, free-drawing &c.') with epistemological considerations reverberates in contemporary science in yet another aspect. In his *Anatomy of the Bones, Muscles, and Joints* (1793) the English surgeon John Bell used vocabulary very similar to Cozens's. Bell differentiated very accurately between artistic and scientific requirements regarding the illustrations in his book: 'Even in the first invention of our best anatomical figures, we see a continual struggle between the anatomist and the painter; one striving for elegance of form, the other insisting upon accuracy of representation.'<sup>48</sup> Cozens also favoured 'truth' over 'elegance' and associated this choice with certain stylistic decisions.<sup>49</sup>

Two important points are worth mentioning: first, Cozens operates within a semantic and epistemological system significant in both science and art, and secondly, Cozens, like scientists of his time, reflects on the interrelations of image, truth, and – by implication – the terms and conditions of impartiality. Bell, one could argue, contrasts an impartial observer, i.e. in his mind the scientist, with someone who is led by other obligations than 'accuracy of representation'. Cozens, on the contrary, claims to present a system to define beauty thereby asserting the possibility of bowing beauty to the laws of science. However, both agree on the notion that certain ways of depicting "reality" are bound to lead towards impartial judgement.

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for truth; whether that truth results from the real agreement or equality of original ideas among themselves; from the agreement of the representation of any object with the thing represented; or from the correspondence of the several parts of any arrangement with each other. It is the very same taste which relishes a demonstration in geometry, that is pleased with the resemblance of a picture to an original, and touched with the harmony of music.

All these have unalterable and fixed foundations in nature, and are therefore equally investigated by reason, and known by study; some with more, some with less clearness, but all exactly in the same way. A picture that is unlike, is false. Disproportionate ordinance of parts is not right because it cannot be true until it ceases to be a contradiction to assert that the parts have no relation to the whole. Colouring is true where it is naturally adapted to the eye, from brightness, from softness, from harmony, from resemblance; because these agree with their object, nature, and therefore are true: as true as mathematical demonstration; but known to be true only to those who study these things.' Reynolds Joshua, *A Discourse, Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10th, 1776* (London, Thomas Davies: 1777) 10–11.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Roberts K.B. – Tomlinson J.D.W., *The Fabric of the Body: European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration* (Oxford: 1992) 498. Cf. Zimmermann, *Ästhetik der Objektivität* 175–183.

<sup>49</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 2.

*'A peach or a Pine-apple': Beauty, Impartiality, and Gender*

It is striking how intensely the discourse on beauty centred on gender. Not only did nearly all authors in the course of the eighteenth century narrow their treatment of the topic to *female* beauty, but gradually, the whole discussion became more and more one about gender relations in general. In the mid-eighteenth century notions of femininity began to structure the discourse on beauty in a hitherto unknown way.<sup>50</sup> Cozens may note that 'the principles on which these specimens [i.e. the portraits] are founded, are applicable to the male as well as the female human head', but this does not change the fact that he *did* choose female heads to give evidence of his principles without including even one single male head.<sup>51</sup>

Beauty seems to have been a subject most naturally to be illustrated by a female body. It also seems to be destined to ignite scholarly discussion among men about female necks, bosoms, or hands. This phenomenon of men discussing female beauty becomes most obvious in another important book on beauty published in 1752: Joseph Spence's *Crito: A Dialogue on Beauty*.<sup>52</sup> The book is about a conversation conducted by a group of gentlemen who have gathered in a pastoral setting. Their conversation is conducted after dining in an 'open Tent' where the air is 'refreshing' and 'the Smell of the Orange and Lemon-trees' stands in stark contrast to the 'Noise and Bustle of the Town'.<sup>53</sup> The sensuous environment leads them inevitably to a sensuous subject. One of them shares an experience he had that very afternoon. Visiting Mrs. B\*\*\*, who had 'a Brute of a Husband',<sup>54</sup> he found the young lady 'leaning on a Couch, with her Head rested negligently on one Hand, whilst with the other she was wiping away a Tear, that stole silently down her cheek'.<sup>55</sup> It would have been the seventh birthday of her late son. However, the distress of the woman is not, or at least not primarily, a reason for empathy, but for reflections on the nature of beauty in general, a subject which, as *Crito* deplors, 'is usually rather viewed with too much Pleasure, than considered with any thing of

<sup>50</sup> Jones R.W., *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: 1998) 81.

<sup>51</sup> Cozens, *Principles of Beauty* 3.

<sup>52</sup> Spence Joseph [Sir Harry Beaumont, pseud.], *Crito; or, A Dialogue on Beauty* (London, R. Dodsley: 1752).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem* 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem* 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem* 3–4.

Judgment'.<sup>56</sup> The succeeding pages of the book are dedicated to elaborating on advantageous ways this judgement can be accomplished. To that end Crito draws a striking analogy. After pointing to the fact that '[t]here is also a Propriety in the Timing of Beauty', meaning that 'a Peach or a Pine-apple are in their highest Beauty, just at the time that they should be eat', Crito concludes that 'a Woman is like a Pine-apple'. She also has 'her Season of growing to her greatest state of Beauty [...] and of Decay from it'.<sup>57</sup> To exercise good judgement on the 'ripeness' of (exclusively) female beauty Crito develops a point system 'by which one might judge tolerably well off the proportional Excellence in any of our most celebrated Beauties'.<sup>58</sup> After briefly describing the distribution of points ('Excellence in Color, at Ten'), they go through an assortment of 'some particular ladies' to whom they allocate beauty points. While Lady L.B.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> gets 'Eight for Color, Four for Shape, Twenty-five for Expression' Mrs. A<sup>\*\*\*</sup> gets 'seventeen for Shape' but only 'Fifteen for Expression'.<sup>59</sup>

The point system is also a way to reduce all kinds of biases and to maximize impartial judgement; 'some little false Byas' is negligible considering that the 'Calculation' may 'not answer in every Point precisely to the Truth' but 'might at least come very near it'. The point system is therefore intended to be a safeguard against misled judgement caused by 'Affection'.<sup>60</sup>

This manoeuvre is best executed by discussing female beauty: be it Spence's rather preposterous point-system or Cozens's paying only lip-service to the applicability of his principles to male bodies as well. Both theories need femininity as their reference point. The same applies to Hogarth. In his theory the female body plays a key role in more than one way. In plate I of the *Analysis of Beauty* the Venus de Medici is at the centre of the image [Fig. 8]. However, Hogarth uses this epitome of beauty subversively. The Venus may occupy a visually pivotal role but is simultaneously deconstructed in the text: 'Who but a bigot, even to the antiques, will say that he has not seen faces and necks, hands and arms in living

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem 5.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem 43.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem 44. In detail: 'In this Scale, I would set the highest Excellence in Color, at Ten; in Shape, at Twenty; in Expression, at Thirty; and in Grace, at Forty. So that the greatest Excellence of Beauty, at the highest Reckoning in each Part of it, would amount to all in One hundred'.

<sup>59</sup> Spence, *Crito* 36.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem 46.

women, that even the Grecian Venus doth but coarsely imitate?’<sup>61</sup> While this attack on the canonical concepts of beauty needs to be understood in the context of the ongoing discussion about the best method of instructing artists (copying casts of the canonical sculptures vs drawing from the life model),<sup>62</sup> it also suggests a consistent pattern in the discourse on beauty during the eighteenth century, namely the male power of judgement over female physical attributes. This also implies that there is no room for female spectatorship, or more precisely that the judgement of beauty assumes a male gaze.<sup>63</sup> In this context it is even less surprising that Cozens chose to visualize his principles via the female face.

In addition, beauty was a category much more used for female portraits, and portraiture was embedded in an elaborate discourse on the proper ways of representing women. For women, however, there was always the danger of slipping from virtuous beauty to contemptible vanity, a danger which was eradicated by representing women pursuing ‘natural’ tasks, for example presenting them as loving mothers or wives. In 1784 a writer wrote a favourable account of Joshua Reynold’s portrait of the Countess of Harrington with her two sons stressing the importance of female virtues like motherly love: ‘Beauty always appears most lovely when recommended by the affectionate ties of kindred.’<sup>64</sup> Maybe there also were these increments of beauty regarding women that accounted for the overwhelming focus on femininity in contemporary discourses on beauty: female beauty with its myriad nuances was found to be an especially appropriate field of learned dispute.

This fixation on femininity in the discourse on beauty corresponded with the exclusion of female artists. A series of satirical prints in the late eighteenth century was devoted to the impropriety of female art practice which included the alleged danger of being a disinterested *female* spectator given the seductive power of beautiful bodies [Fig. 12]. The sculptor Anne Seymour Damer is the object of ridicule in a caricature that depicts

<sup>61</sup> Hogarth, *Analysis* 59.

<sup>62</sup> Paulson, “Introduction” xix.

<sup>63</sup> The association of femininity and ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ has been subject of numerous studies informed by feminist and psychoanalytic theory and discourse analysis. Cf. Pointon M., *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665–1800* (Oxford: 1997) 7; Mulvey L., *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: 1989); Eiblmayr S., *Die Frau als Bild: Der weibliche Körper in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: 1993).

<sup>64</sup> *Morning Herald*, 14 April 1784, quoted in: Retford K., *Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: 2006) 97.

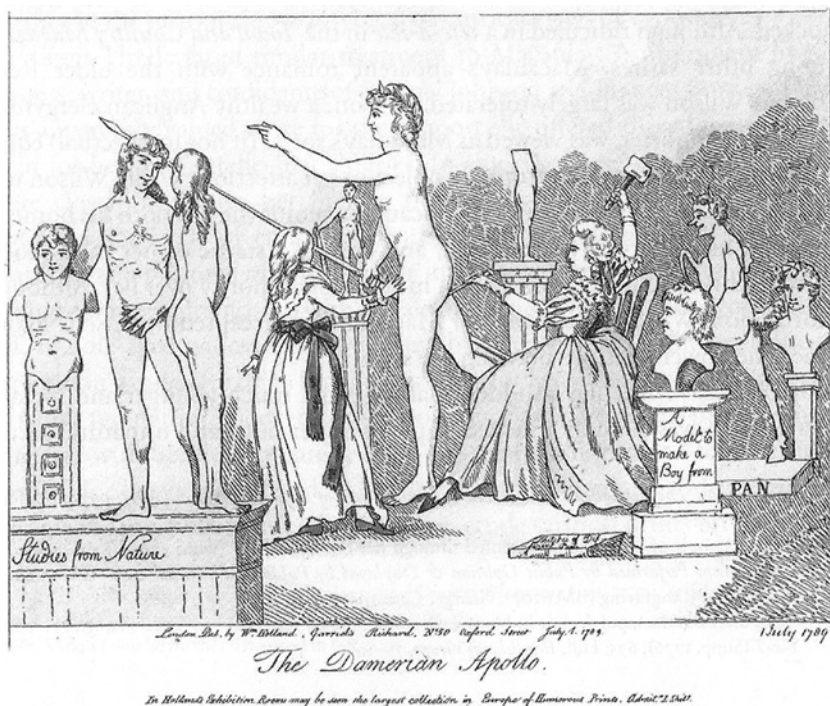


Fig. 12. *The Damerian Apollo*, 1789.

her in her studio working on a larger-than-life sculpture of Apollo, god of the arts.<sup>65</sup> Surrounded by sculptures marked as 'Studies from nature' as well as ancient characters like Pan, she has positioned her chisel in the Apollo's buttocks swinging the hammer she holds in her raised right hand. Protruding from Apollo's crotch is an enormous spear, admired by a young female pupil standing right beside it.

The print not only illustrates that women are unfit for 'serious artistic endeavour' but also shows them as corrupted and not being able to restrain themselves in the presence of the represented nude.<sup>66</sup> By implication the print seems to give evidence to the notion that men are able to be impartial judges of (female) beauty by their ability to ward off affective entanglement while women are always already deeply involved on

<sup>65</sup> McCreery C., *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: 2004) 122–123.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem* 122.

an emotional or sexual level, making them allegedly incompetent to be disinterested spectators.

*Impartiality and the Erosion of the Discourse on Beauty*

In many respects the notion of impartiality played an important role in regard to the increasing critique of any normative characterization of beauty. First and foremost the attempt to provide visual means by which to become an impartial spectator of beauty, as Cozens had done, seems to have been a reaction to the philosophical doubts about a 'permanent Form of Beauty'.<sup>67</sup> As the search for a universal definition of Beauty became increasingly futile, one way to avoid abandoning the subject altogether was to pursue a more practical approach: how could one identify a beautiful face? What were the formal elements of beauty in a face? These seemed to be questions which could be answered without entering the most uncertain terrain of a 'general rule' on beauty.<sup>68</sup>

On another level Cozens's focus on finding *principles* of beauty by installing the notion of an impartial spectator can be understood as a backlash against the increasing significance of subjectivity in the arts. In late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a process started in which the artist became an 'Individuum [...], das allein auf seine inneren Seelenlagen und Gefühle bezogen ist und sein Profil aus der produktiven Reibung zu den Wahrnehmungskonventionen und normativen Praktiken der Gesellschaft entwickelt'.<sup>69</sup> In the wake of this process beauty gradually lost its core position in art and aesthetic theory. Therefore, the impartiality Cozens hoped to be able to achieve by providing a visual formula had a necessarily paradoxical touch because it reanimated an aesthetic concept that more and more began to lose meaning.

In regard to the history of objectivity as it unfolds in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, two things are noteworthy: first, the fact that since the later nineteenth century, objectivity became a quality of images and in particular a capacity ascribed to the producers of images, and secondly that impartiality as it has been described here through the example

<sup>67</sup> Alison, *Essays* 232.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>69</sup> Ruppert W., *Der moderne Künstler: Zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der kreativen Individualität in der kulturellen Moderne im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1998) 12.



of Alexander Cozens's *Principles of Beauty* thus cannot be merged into a 'prehistory of objectivity'. The fascination that the new scientific ideal of objectivity exerted over the artist of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has to be sharply distinguished from the effort of educating an impartial spectator by providing visual formulas as Cozens had done – even if the accompanying visualizations seem to be quite comparable [Fig. 13].

Duchenne de Boulogne, a French neurologist with a great interest in the arts, published *Mécanisme de physionomie humaine* in 1862. In this richly illustrated book Duchenne wanted to show how the muscles in the human face produce different facial expressions. To that end he stimulated muscular contractions in the faces of several experimental subjects with electrical probes, and photographed the results of his experiments. The *Mécanisme* also contained a so-called aesthetic section, by which he explicitly tied his scientific project to the artistic sphere. It was Duchenne's ambition to determine the anatomical preconditions of beauty ('l'ensemble des conditions qui constituent le beau')<sup>70</sup> and make them visible by appropriate illustrations. Contrary to Cozens, however, the impartiality of the readers of his book no longer played a role. Duchenne aimed at the objectivity of *the image*. By using photography he was sure he had found a way to present 'truth' to the reader: photography, for Duchenne, was 'aussi fidèle que le miroir'.<sup>71</sup> But only a scientist – i.e. Duchenne – could actually take the photographs, since even 'l'artiste le plus habile' would not be able to visualize 'les faits physiologiques' Duchenne wanted to present.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the *image* guaranteed utmost objectivity. The spectator did not need to be in an impartial state of mind. For Cozens, on the other hand, the intricate visual system he provided was a means by which the spectator could be shielded from aesthetic biases evoked by feelings and personal partialities.

<sup>70</sup> Duchenne (de Boulogne) G.-B., *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine ou analyse de l'expression des passions* (Paris: 1862) sec. II, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Duchenne, *Mécanisme*, v.

<sup>72</sup> Duchenne, *Mécanisme*, vi.

FIG.



Fig. 13. Duchenne de Boulogne, *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine*, plate 9, 1862.



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